

# BRILL'S STUDIES IN INTELLECTUAL HISTORY

*General Editor*

A.J. VANDERJAGT, University of Groningen

*Editorial Board*

M. COLISH, Oberlin College

J.I. ISRAEL, University College, London

J.D. NORTH, University of Groningen

H.A. OBERMAN, University of Arizona, Tucson

R.H. POPKIN, Washington University, St. Louis-UCLA

VOLUME 43



# RENAISSANCE ARGUMENT

*Valla and Agricola in the Traditions of Rhetoric and Dialectic*

BY

PETER MACK



E.J. BRILL  
LEIDEN · NEW YORK · KÖLN  
1993

The paper in this book meets the guidelines for permanence and durability of the Committee on Production Guidelines for Book Longevity of the Council on Library Resources.

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

93-26623  
CIP

**Die Deutsche Bibliothek - CIP-Einheitsaufnahme**

Mack, Peter:

Renaissance argument : Valla and Agricola in the traditions of rhetoric and dialectic / by Peter Mack. – Leiden ; New York ; Köln : Brill, 1993

(Brill's studies in intellectual history ; Vol. 43)

ISBN 90-04-09879-8

NE: GT

ISSN 0920-8607  
ISBN 90 04 09879 8

© Copyright 1993 by E.J. Brill, Leiden, The Netherlands

*All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, translated, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior written permission of the publisher.*

*Authorization to photocopy items for internal or personal use is granted by E.J. Brill provided that the appropriate fees are paid directly to Copyright Clearance Center, 27 Congress Street, Salem MA 01970, USA. Fees are subject to change.*

PRINTED IN THE NETHERLANDS

**FOR VICKI BEHM AND JUNE MACK**



## CONTENTS

Preface .....	IX
I. Rhetoric, Dialectic and the Use of Language .....	1
II. Valla's <i>Repastinatio dialecticae et philosophiae</i> .....	22
III. Categories and Metaphysics .....	37
IV. Valla's Contribution to Logic .....	74
V. Grammar, Rhetoric and Dialectic in <i>Repastinatio</i> .....	96
VI. Rudolph Agricola and <i>De inventione dialectica</i> .....	117
VII. Agricola's Topics .....	130
VIII. Dialectical Invention .....	168
IX. Exposition and Argumentation .....	190
X. Book Three: Moving, Pleasing and Disposition .....	203
XI. The Use of Dialectic .....	227
XII. <i>De inventione dialectica</i> in the Traditions of Rhetoric and Dialectic .....	244
XIII. The Diffusion of <i>De inventione dialectica</i> .....	257
XIV. The Reception of <i>De inventione dialectica</i> .....	280
XV. Erasmus and Vives .....	303
XVI. Melanchthon .....	320
XVII. Ramus .....	334
XVIII. Conclusion: <i>De inventione dialectica</i> in the sixteenth century ..	356
Select Bibliography .....	375
General Index .....	387
Index to Passages from <i>Repastinatio</i> .....	393
Index to Passages from <i>De inventione dialectica</i> .....	394



## PREFACE

This book presents a new interpretation of the two most innovative renaissance works on the use of language. Lorenzo Valla's *Repastinatio dialecticae et philosophiae* (1439) was a devastating critique of Aristotelian logic and metaphysics. It attempted to re-establish philosophy on the basis of classical Latin usage, and to produce a simplified version of dialectic which could teach practical argument in neoclassical Latin. Rudolph Agricola's *De inventione dialectica* (1479) is an original synthesis of rhetoric and dialectic. It provides a new version of the topics, a system for producing argument, exposition and emotional persuasion, and principles for organising texts. Its perceptive discussions of classical authors make it a course on reading as well as a textbook of composition. Parts one and two of my book provide a close analysis of both works in relation to the broader traditions of the arts of language.

This book is also a survey of an intellectual movement. Valla and Agricola respond to and alter high medieval and early renaissance approaches to the study of language. Their innovations are rejected, adopted, and developed in new directions by the northern renaissance rhetoricians, dialecticians and teachers who succeed them, Erasmus, Vives, Melanchthon, Ramus and their followers. The ultimate result of the reforms of Valla and Agricola lies in the reading and writing practices of thousands of sixteenth-century people. I have tried, in the third part of the book, to give as full an account of Agricola's influence as the sources allow. The historical fruitfulness of renaissance training in the use of language is not in doubt, but in my view Valla and Agricola are well worth reading even today, and that is one reason that I have devoted so much attention to their works.

Sections of this book originate in my theses for the MPhil (*Permeations of Renaissance Dialectic into English Discourse c.1580-c.1620*, 1978) and PhD (*Rudolph Agricola and Renaissance Dialectic*, 1983) degrees of the Warburg Institute, University of London. I am grateful to my supervisors, Michael Baxandall and the late Charles Schmitt. Material for this book has appeared in different form in two volumes edited by F. Akkerman and A.

J. Vanderjagt, *Rodolphus Agricola Phrisius* (Leiden, 1988) and *Wessel Gansfort and Northern Humanism* (Leiden, 1993), in *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 48 (1985) and in *Vivarium*, 31 (1993). I am grateful to the editors for permission to reuse this material. The two plates in chapter 17, from P. Ramus, *Professio Regia* (Basel, 1576) are reproduced by permission of the British Library.

For their invaluable assistance I must also thank: Fokke Akkerman, Grahame Castor, Henry Cohn, Elizabeth Cook, Peter Davidson, Ken Gransden, Larry Green, Keith Hoskin, Gerda Huisman, Lisa Jardine, Bob Kimbrough, Dilwyn Knox, Jill Kraye, Alfonso Maierù, Kees Meerhoff, John Monfasani, John Robertson and Tom Winnifrith, all of whom have read portions of the text or contributed materials. I must particularly thank J. B. Trapp, who has stood by this project for a long time, and read more versions of it than either of us cares to remember. I should also like to acknowledge the help of my teachers, particularly John Binfield, Robert Burchfield, Colin Greenland, Robin Holmes, the late Patrick MacFarlan, Joe Vicary, the late D. P. Walker, and Francis Warner, and the example of J. R. McNally, the pioneer of Agricola studies in English, who died tragically young. I am grateful to Arjo Vanderjagt, the general editor of Brill's Studies in Intellectual History, and to Julian Deahl and Elisabeth Erdman-Visser for publishing the book so promptly. This would not have been possible without the exceptionally generous help I received from Pauline Wilson and Rachel Parkins of the University of Warwick Computing Service. I must also thank the many librarians who have furnished me with books, manuscripts and microfilms, and who have answered my questions, especially those at Cambridge University Library, the British Library, the Warburg Institute, the Bodleian Library, the Badia di San Pietro, Perugia, the Würtembergische Landesbibliothek, Stuttgart, the Universitetsbibliothek, Uppsala, the Vatican Library, and Warwick University Library.

My research on Lorenzo Valla was made possible by a Leverhulme European Studentship, which allowed me to study the manuscripts in Rome and Perugia (and gave me a wonderful year in Italy). For the last fourteen years my research has been supported by the English Department at the University of Warwick. I am grateful to many students, colleagues and secretaries in the department for their help and interest. I hope that my debt to the intellectual traditions of the Warburg Institute is obvious on every page of this book. My extended family, my wife Vicki, and our children,

Johanna, William and Emily have done most to support me, and I thank them most of all.

Leamington Spa, Mayday 1993.



## CHAPTER ONE

### RHETORIC, DIALECTIC AND THE USE OF LANGUAGE

In the first sonnet of his sequence, *Astrophil and Stella*, Sir Philip Sidney explores Astrophil's difficulties in finding suitable expression for his love of Stella.<sup>1</sup>

Loving in truth, and faine in verse my love to show,  
That the deare She might take some pleasure of my paine:  
Pleasure might cause her reade, reading might make her know,  
Knowledge might pitie winne, and pitie grace obtaine,  
I sought fit words to paint the blackest face of woe,       5  
Studying inventions fine, her wits to entertaine:  
Oft turning others' leaves, to see if thence would flow  
Some fresh and fruitfull showers upon my sunne-burn'd braine.  
But words came halting forth, wanting Invention's stay,  
Invention, Nature's child, fled step-dame Studie's blowes   10  
And others' feete still seem'd but strangers in my way.  
Thus great with child to speake, and helplesse in my throwes,  
Biting my trewand pen, beating my selfe for spite,  
'Foole', said my Muse to me, 'looke in thy heart and write.'

The first sonnet introduces the main subject of the sequence, Astrophil's experience of love, and opens up the question of the appropriate method of writing love-poetry, whether to employ the writing techniques of the school-room, or depend on the inspiration provided by one's muse. The poem plays with the language of rhetoric (in the repeated use of the term 'invention') and the structures of dialectic (for example, in the sequence of inferences in the first four lines). It addresses a debate which is fundamental to the art of rhetoric: is natural inspiration or studied proficiency more likely to produce effective writing?<sup>2</sup> Rhetoric and dialectic formed the basis of sixteenth-century education in the use of language. They provided the framework in which questions of writing could be discussed, and gave Sidney and his audience a shared set of

---

<sup>1</sup> W. A. Ringler ed., *The Poems of Sir Philip Sidney* (Oxford, 1962), p. 165, with excellent commentary, pp. 458-59.

<sup>2</sup> Isocrates, *Antidosis*, 187-190, Cicero, *De oratore*, 1.19.85-32.148 *passim*, Brutus, 29.110-11, Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, 2.19, 10.2.1-12.

reference points, through which both meanings and pleasures could be produced.

Over their long history the distinction between rhetoric and dialectic has been made in several different ways. I shall argue that the two subjects have to be studied together. For the moment it will suffice to say that while both aim to teach people how to persuade others, dialectic concentrates on the techniques of argument, while rhetoric explores a variety of verbal, emotional and presentational means. In many renaissance texts, including the first sonnet of *Astrophil and Stella*, they work together.

When Astrophil writes that he has been 'studying inventions fine, her wits to entertaine' (line 6), his readers are expected to distinguish a range of meanings of invention. Primarily invention is the part of rhetoric which teaches the orator how to find subject-matter suitable for persuading an audience. But here Sidney is referring to the inventions of others ('oft turning others' leaves'), that is to say either their completed poems or the outline schemes for their works.<sup>3</sup> It is significant that the term can apply both to the plan and to the completed work. In line nine ('But words came halting forth, wanting Invention's stay') invention is the structure which sustains, and the impulse which propels, the outpouring of his style. In line ten ('Invention, nature's child, fled step-dame Studie's blowes') it is the equivalent of poetic inspiration, not to be coerced by labour. When in the *Apology for Poetry* Sidney expresses the view that the plan, the *foreconceit*, is artistically the most significant part of the work,<sup>4</sup> he endorses the renaissance view that the most important aspect of composition is invention. This book will consider what this means and how it came about.

In the rhetoric manuals the greater part of the section on invention (itself the first and usually the longest part of the whole book) is devoted to argument: how to find arguments suitable for different types of case, how to organize them and how to use them. So invention includes argument. Rhetoric's companion, or rival, subject of dialectic employs the word invention in a related but more specialized sense. Dialectical invention

<sup>3</sup> Some authors included schematic diagrams in their books: R. Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, 3 vols (London, 1932), e.g. I, pp. 126-129. Sir R. Dallington, *A Survey of the Grand Duke's State of Tuscany in the Year of our Lord 1596* (London, 1605), A2<sup>v</sup>, *A Method for Travell Shewed by taking the view of France...* (London, ?1605), unnumbered page immediately before B1<sup>r</sup>. I owe this example to Professor J. B. Trapp. Similar analyses of school and church discipline are found in British Library Ms. Harley 3230, fols. 2<sup>r-v</sup>. K. J. Höltgen, 'Synoptische Tabellen in der medizinischen Literatur und die Logik Agricolae and Ramus', *Sudhoffs Archiv*, 49 (1965), pp. 371-390.

<sup>4</sup> P. Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry*, ed. G. Shepherd (Manchester, 1973), p. 101.

deals with the discovery of arguments. The other part of dialectic is judgement, by which arguments are tested and put into appropriate forms.

The association between poetry, rhetoric and argument implied in Sidney's use of the term invention is already evident in the sonnet's opening lines:

Loving in truth, and faine in verse my love to show,  
 That the deare She might take some pleasure of my paine:  
 Pleasure might cause her reade, reading might make her know,  
 Knowledge might pitie winne, and pitie grace obtaine ...

Logically (though the logic is as much playful as persuasive) Sidney deploys a sequence of arguments from cause and effect in order to justify the act of writing about his love. Rhetorically the progression from one repeated word to the next embodies the figure of climax (in Latin, *gradatio*).

Sidney writes (line 9) about a logical structure which gives shape and solidity to a work, but he plays with rhetorical terms and logical shapes. He makes the body of the sonnet an oblique introduction to its concluding line, itself a conventional statement of an anti-conventional attitude, a reworking of the age-old rhetorical precept on the need to avoid the appearance of art. His poem flaunts the rhetorical skills its concluding line pretends to eschew. By simultaneously using and playing with the teachings of rhetoric and dialectic, Sidney illustrates their poetic potentialities.

The awareness of argumentative technique and the possibilities of persuasion which Sidney and his audience here share seems to me characteristic of later sixteenth- and earlier seventeenth-century literature, in France and England at any rate. The sonnets of Sidney and Shakespeare, the 'songs' of Donne, and the essays of Montaigne and Bacon depend on exploiting and playing with logical structures. The prose styles of Rabelais and Nashe, Lyly and Andrewes demand a readership which is interested in issues of diction and sentence construction. *Paradise Lost*, we are told, is 'the logical epic'.

This book discusses the renaissance textbooks which brought rhetoric, dialectic and argument together. It examines two key works: the *Repastinatio dialecticae et philosophiae* of Lorenzo Valla (1407-57) and the *De inventione dialectica* of Rudolph Agricola (1444-85). The interpretation of *Repastinatio* offered in the first section addresses Valla's criticism of the prevailing Aristotelian philosophical system and his attempt at a reform of metaphysics and dialectic. The second section, discussing *De inventione dialectica* as a textbook of composition, emphasizes the way Agricola

combines elements from the traditional teachings of rhetoric and dialectic with his own observations on his reading. The third section describes the diffusion of Agricola's book, in print and through the educational system, and assesses his influence on the teaching of the arts of language in northern Europe in the sixteenth century. In all three sections I refer to the history and doctrines of rhetoric and dialectic, and I examine the relationship between ideas, textbooks and practices of teaching. What interests me most is what renaissance textbooks have to say about reading and writing, in the renaissance and now. In that perspective Rudolph Agricola seems to me the key figure in renaissance dialectic and one of the most important of all writers on the use of language.

The purpose of this chapter is to set the scene for the studies of Valla and Agricola which follow. I shall discuss the teachings of rhetoric and dialectic, their histories, and the relationship between them. Then I shall describe the *trivium* in Italy at the turn of the fifteenth century, concentrating on two aspects: the persistence of late scholastic logic and the coming of humanism. Finally I shall consider the attitudes of earlier humanists to two questions which interested Valla and Agricola: the value of Aristotelian dialectic, and the reading of classical texts.

### *Rhetoric and Dialectic*

According to tradition, rhetoric originated in Sicily in the fifth century BC. It aimed to teach effective public speaking to those who wished to protect their own interests in the democratic city states of Syracuse and Athens.<sup>5</sup>

At its broadest, rhetoric was a complete programme of instruction which aimed to produce orators, men fit to exercise political leadership. More narrowly, and more frequently, it was an art which taught students how to write orations, and how to use language appropriately and stylishly. Rhetoric takes a broad view of persuasion, and of the resources of language. The orator must know how to teach, move and please. He must

---

<sup>5</sup> General accounts of rhetoric: R. Volkmann, *Die Rhetorik der Griechen und Römer* (Leipzig, 1885), H. Lausberg, *Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik*, 2 vols (Munich, 1960), R. Barthes, 'L'ancienne rhétorique: aide-mémoire', *Communications*, 16 (1970), pp. 172-229 (translated in *The Semiotic Challenge* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 11-93), J. Martin, *Antike Rhetorik: Technik und Methode* (Munich, 1974), B. Vickers, *In Defence of Rhetoric* (Oxford, 1988). Histories: G. Kennedy, *The Art of Persuasion in Greece* (Princeton, 1963), *The Art of Rhetoric in the Roman World* (Princeton, 1972), T. Conley, *Rhetoric in the European Tradition* (New York, 1990). My general remarks are based mainly on Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, Cicero's *De inventione* and *Partitiones oratoriae*, Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria* and the anonymous *Rhetorica ad Herennium*. H. Caplan's Loeb edition (London, 1954) of this last text has an excellent introduction and analysis.

understand how to use reason (*logos*), emotion (*pathos*) and character, or self-presentation (*ethos*), in order to persuade his audience. He must master different styles, and understand the affective potential of language. The full course in rhetoric teaches many different skills, for example: how to think about an audience, how to begin an oration, how to relate a story, how to determine the main point at issue, how to devise and formulate arguments, in what order to place the parts of an oration, how to determine which style to employ and how to write it, how to conclude, how to deliver, and how to arouse the emotions of an audience. The standard ancient manuals of rhetoric in use during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, Cicero's *De inventione* and the anonymous *Rhetorica ad Herennium*,<sup>6</sup> treat some of these subjects perfunctorily, concentrating on the ingredients of the four-part oration,<sup>7</sup> and on listing the figures of speech, and giving much less attention to the emotions or to thinking about disposition.

Dialectic originated in the philosophical schools of Athens in the early fourth century BC.<sup>8</sup> For Plato it was the technique of philosophical argument, the skill of persuading an adversary through dialogue. He regarded it as an essential part of philosophical training.<sup>9</sup> In the Aristotelian tradition dialectic was broadened to include training in argument generally, investigation of the theory of argument, and the discovery of rules and

<sup>6</sup> *De inventione* was available from the time it was composed (around 90 BC) but it became the chief rhetoric text only in the fourth century. *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (probably composed around 85 BC), which neither Cicero nor Quintilian seems to have known, became prominent in the eleventh century (hence it is called the new or second rhetoric), and became more important than *De inventione* quite rapidly. In the Renaissance both works were widely used and they were often printed together, even after 1491 when Raphael Regius showed that the ascription of *Rhetorica ad Herennium* to Cicero was incorrect. P. Hadot, *Marius Victorinus: Recherches sur sa vie et ses œuvres* (Paris, 1971), pp. 73-77, J. O. Ward, 'From Antiquity to the Renaissance: Glosses and Commentaries on Cicero's *Rhetorica*', in J. J. Murphy ed., *Medieval Eloquence* (Berkeley, 1978), pp. 57, 60, H. Caplan ed., *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (London, 1954), pp. ix, xxv, J. J. Murphy, *Renaissance Rhetoric* (New York, 1981), pp. 75-76, 89-94.

<sup>7</sup> I refer throughout to the four-part oration because there are four main sections. Some authors obtain more parts by treating division (where you list the main points you will have to argue) as a separate part rather than a subsection of narration or by treating proof and refutation as separate parts. Aristotle gives four parts of which only the statement of facts and the argument are essential, *Rhetoric*, 1414b8, as does *Partitiones oratoriae*, 1.4. *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, 1.3.4, *De inventione*, 1.14.19, and *De oratore*, 1.31.143 give six. Survey in *Institutio oratoria*, 3.9.17.

<sup>8</sup> On the history of logic generally, W. and M. Kneale, *The Development of Logic* (Oxford, 1962).

<sup>9</sup> J. Stenzel, *Plato's Method of Dialectic*, trans. D. J. Allan (New York, 1964), pp. xi-xvi. R. Robinson, *Plato's Earlier Dialectic* (Oxford, 1953), pp. 7-32, 93-99, 105-108, 202-208.

methods for conducting other subjects.<sup>10</sup> Aristotle's logical works became the standard logic of late antiquity, the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.<sup>11</sup> There is a division between his first four treatises which are organised like an independent, abstract science, moving methodically from first principles to an exhaustive account of a tightly delimited set of argumentative forms, and the last two which discuss, in a reactive and practical way, tactics for disputation. Thus *Categories* includes a discussion of the classes of words and things, which we would regard as part of metaphysics, and *Prior Analytics* is almost a textbook of formal logic. But *Topics* consists of a long list of rules for arguing ('if your opponent proposes A, then consider arguments like B'). In its historical development, dialectic was open to both possibilities. Medieval logicians could discuss technical questions of metaphysics, semantics, and formal logic. They could also teach young people how to conduct disputation.<sup>12</sup> Aristotelian logic can be criticised for being rather abstract, for dealing with an artificially restricted subset of language (mainly sentences of the form 'A is B'), for discussing issues which 'belong' to other parts of philosophy, and for lacking a straightforward system for generating arguments.

Compared with rhetoric, dialectic appears to be narrower in its focus, but particular rhetorics often neglect aspects of the subject, and principles from dialectic can be applied widely in other subjects. Dialectic starts from

<sup>10</sup> The evolution of Aristotle's attitude to dialectic is discussed in F. Solmsen, *Die Entwicklung der aristotelischen Logik und Rhetorik* (Berlin, 1929), *Neue philologische Untersuchungen* 4, and various papers in G. E. L. Owen ed., *Aristotle on Dialectic* (Oxford, 1968), esp. pp. 49-137, J. D. G. Evans, *Aristotle's Concept of Dialectic* (Cambridge, 1977), pp. 1-52, 89-103, T. Irwin, *Aristotle's First Principles* (Oxford, 1990), pp. 26-72. Aristotle distinguished dialectic (which is useful for training, everyday arguing and establishing first principles) from demonstration (which shows how a science should be presented, starting from first principles). In the Middle Ages the terms dialectic and logic were used interchangeably to refer to the whole subject (including demonstration), though reasoning about doubtful issues could still be called dialectic, P. Michaud-Quentin, 'L'Emploi des termes logica et dialectica au moyen âge' in *Arts libéraux et philosophie au moyen âge* (Montreal, 1969), pp. 855-862.

<sup>11</sup> They were more or less unknown in the ancient world until the end of the first century BC, when they were edited by Andronicus of Rhodes. The Middle Ages rediscovered Aristotle's logic in stages. Widely used compendia like Peter of Spain's *Tractatus*, ed. L. M. De Rijk (Assen, 1973) show how Aristotle's doctrines were taught to beginners in the high Middle Ages.

<sup>12</sup> General works on medieval logic: N. Kretzmann et al. ed., *The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1982), hereafter *CHLMP*, P. Boehner, *Medieval Logic: An Outline of Its Development from 1250-c.1400* (Manchester, 1952), E. A. Moody, 'The Medieval Contribution to Logic', in his *Studies in Medieval Philosophy, Science and Logic* (Berkeley, 1975), pp. 371-392, J. Pinborg, *Logik und Semantik im Mittelalter* (Stuttgart, 1972), J. Marenbon, *Early Medieval Philosophy (480-1150)*, *An Introduction* (London, 1983), *Later Medieval Philosophy, An Introduction* (London, 1987).

the disputation and rhetoric from the oration, but both are easily extended to other forms. Rhetoric ought always to be concerned with an audience, and dialectic should aim at establishing knowledge, but some speeches are dominated by the forms of rhetoric, and some disputation are preoccupied with display and employ dialectical tricks. Rhetoric originated in practical life and political commitment, but under the empire it concentrated on studying the great orations of the past and on declamation.<sup>13</sup> Both subjects share and fight over two chief concerns: persuasion, and training in the use of language. Particular works can usually be assigned to one subject or the other, but there is a common territory, and boundaries shift. When Zeno the Stoic compared rhetoric to the open palm, and dialectic to the closed fist, he presumably meant that each takes a different attitude to the same subject-matter.<sup>14</sup> Rhetoric and dialectic have often been defined in terms of their opposition to each other. Dialectic originated in Plato's hostility to rhetoric. Isocrates responded by rejecting the minute cavilling of dialectic.<sup>15</sup> Both attitudes recur in later periods, but we can also find many proposals for cooperation. In *Phaedrus*,<sup>16</sup> Plato envisages a purified form of rhetoric, based on dialectical principles. Aristotle taught both subjects in the Academy, and he regarded them as counterparts. Cicero and Quintilian suggested that orators should study dialectic, though they should avoid the more technical aspects.<sup>17</sup> The cycle of the seven liberal arts, which originated, according to Ilsetraut Hadot, in the neoplatonic schools of the fourth century AD, institutionalised cooperation between the two.<sup>18</sup> Both subjects taught skills required by the educated person, while neither could claim to offer a complete, self-sufficient education.

<sup>13</sup> Compare Pliny, *Epistolae*, 7.17 (and elsewhere), E. Auerbach, *Literary Language and Its Public* (London, 1965), pp. 245-247. Fumaroli points out that Tacitus's *Dialogue on Orators* suggests that in an absolutist age the poet replaces the orator as the model free man, *L'âge de l'éloquence* (Geneva, 1980), pp. 63-70. S. F. Bonner, *Roman Declamation* (Liverpool, 1969), esp. pp. vi, 34, 13-16, 39-40, D. A. Russell, *Greek Declamation* (Cambridge, 1983), esp. pp. 9, 79-85, 106ff.

<sup>14</sup> Cicero, *Orator*, 32.113, Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, 2.20.7, More, 'Letter to Dorp', *Complete Works of St Thomas More*, XV, ed. D. Kinney (New Haven, 1986), pp. 14-16.

<sup>15</sup> Isocrates, *Antidosis*, 258-269, *Epistolae*, V. 3ff., Plato, *Gorgias*, 452e-453a, 454e-455a, 458e-460a, 462e-463c.

<sup>16</sup> Plato, *Phaedrus*, 259e-274b.

<sup>17</sup> Cicero, *Orator*, 13.44-49, *Partitiones oratoriae*, 40.139, Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, 2.21.13, 5.8-5.10, 12.2.10-14. P. Hadot, 'Philosophie, dialectique, rhétorique dans l'antiquité', *Studia Philosophica*, 39 (1980), pp. 139-166 is instructive on the connections between the two subjects.

<sup>18</sup> I. Hadot, *Arts libéraux et philosophie dans la pensée antique* (Paris, 1984), pp. 101-154.

Cooperation did not put an end to rivalry or to disputes about ownership of particular parts of the syllabus. At different times some authors ascribe the leading role in the *trivium* to grammar, others to dialectic and others still to rhetoric.<sup>19</sup> In the mid-twelfth century all three arts appear to have flourished, with considerable study of rhetoric and the classical authors alongside the advances in dialectic associated with Abelard.<sup>20</sup> Abelard's own prologue to *Romans* emphasized the rhetorical intention of scripture.<sup>21</sup> From the thirteenth century onwards, with the foundation of the universities, dialectic became the intellectually dominant part of the *trivium*, while rhetoric was left with the important practical task of teaching official letter-writing.<sup>22</sup> We must now look in more detail at the situation of the *trivium* in Italy around the turn of the fifteenth century. But it is important to remember that the *trivium* underwent many changes in the course of its history. The humanists who tried to write a dialectic which taught arguing in real language, and which fitted in with classical rhetoric were not breaking the laws of nature.

---

<sup>19</sup> For Boethius dialectic is more important, providing rhetoric with its basis; in Martianus Capella, rhetoric is the climax of the *trivium*; in Isidore grammar occupies three times as much space as each of the others. Boethius, *De differentiis topicis*, PL 64, 1205C-1206C, Martianus Capella, *De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii*, ed. J. Willis (Stuttgart, 1983), 3.223-229, 4.328-334, 5.426-435. Isidore, *Etymologiae*, ed. W. M. Lindsay (Oxford, 1911), books 1-2, c5r-I6v.

<sup>20</sup> J. O. Ward, 'From Antiquity to the Renaissance: Glosses and Commentaries on Cicero's *Rhetorica*', pp. 25-67 (38, 43-4). The thesis on which this valuable article is based, *Artificiosa Eloquenta in the Middle Ages*, 2 vols, (Ph.D., University of Toronto, 1972) should also be consulted, as should the articles by K. M. Fredborg in *Cahiers de l'institut du moyen-âge grec et latin*, 7, 11 and 13, cited in n. 14 of Ward's article, C. H. Haskins, *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge, Mass., 1927), R. L. Benson and G. Constable ed., *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century* (Oxford, 1982), and P. Dronke ed., *A History of Twelfth-Century Western Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1988), in which the article by K. Jacobi on the logic of the later twelfth century (pp. 227-251) uses John of Salisbury's views as a framework.

<sup>21</sup> Abelard is translated in A. J. Minnis and A. B. Scott, *Medieval Literary Theory and Criticism: The Commentary Tradition*, revised edition (Oxford, 1991), pp. 100-105.

<sup>22</sup> J. J. Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages* (Berkeley, 1974), E. Faral, *Les Arts poétiques du XIIe et XIIIe siècle* (Paris 1924, repr. 1971), T. Charland, *Artes praedicandi* (Paris, 1936), L. Rockinger, *Briefsteller und Formelbücher des elften bis vierzehnten Jahrhunderts* (Munich, 1863), repr. in 2 vols (New York, 1961), H. Wieruszowski, 'Ars dictaminis in the time of Dante', in her *Politics and Culture in Medieval Spain and Italy* (Rome, 1971), pp. 359-77, J. R. Barker, 'The Ars Dictaminis and Rhetorical Textbooks at the Bolognese University in the Fourteenth Century', *Medievalia et Humanistica*, n.s. 5 (1974), pp. 153-68, Jacques de Dinant, *Summa Dictaminis*, ed. E. J. Polak (Geneva, 1975), W. D. Patt, 'The early Ars Dictaminis as a response to a changing society', *Viator*, 9 (1978), pp. 133-156.

*The trivium in Italy at the turn of the fifteenth century*

In Italy as elsewhere in Europe, university arts courses were dominated by Aristotelian logic and natural philosophy.<sup>23</sup> The importance of logic in the universities was also guaranteed by their methods of teaching: lectures and disputations. In the older form of lecture the teacher would first read the selected portion of the text (so that the students could write it down); then give an account of its structure by dividing it into ever smaller sections; thirdly give an exposition of each part by paraphrase, explanation and summary; and finally discuss particularly difficult points (*dubia*) separately. A second kind of lecture seems to be reflected in the *quaestio* commentaries. These consist of a series of questions, to each of which are given: a tentative answer, questions about that answer, replies to the questions, and a resolution of the problem.

Students were also required to attend disputations. In ordinary disputations, a master would introduce a subject, dividing it into topics. One of the bachelors would then attempt to uphold the master's opinion against questions (many of which would attempt to lure him into agreeing to something which could be shown to contradict his first opinion) from the audience. The master could help him out if necessary. At a later date the master would deliver a determination summarising the arguments for and against at each point and giving his own overall solution. Bachelors were also required to dispute to obtain the master's degree. In this examination the candidate had to defend his own solution to a problem put to him against the objections offered by the presiding master.<sup>24</sup> The requirement to attend disputations and to participate in them ensured the continuing usefulness of dialectical skills, such as distinguishing the senses of words, noticing the implications of statements and composing questions which

<sup>23</sup> For example, the Paris statutes of 1366 and the Oxford statutes 'before 1350' both insist on the whole *Organon* and many of Aristotle's other works, without naming any rhetoric books. H. Denifle and A. Chatelain eds., *Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis*, 4 vols (Paris, 1889-97), II, pp. 143-146, S. Gibson ed., *Statuta Antiqua Universitatis Oxoniensis* (Oxford, 1931), pp. 32-35. On medieval universities generally: H. Rashdall, *The Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages*, 2nd edn, ed. F. M. Powicke and A. B. Emden, 3 vols (Oxford, 1936), J. Weisheipl, 'The Place of the Liberal Arts in the University Curriculum during the XIVth and XVth Centuries', in *Arts libéraux et philosophie au moyen âge* (Montreal, 1969), pp. 209-213.

<sup>24</sup> L. M. de Rijk, *La Philosophie au moyen âge* (Leiden, 1985), pp. 100-102. A. Kenny, J. Pinborg, 'Medieval Philosophical Literature', *CHLMP*, pp. 19-33. P. Glorieux, 'L'Enseignement au moyen âge. Techniques et méthodes en usage à la Faculté de Théologie de Paris au XIII siècle', *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen âge*, 43 (1968), pp. 65-168.

require awkward choices.

The situation in Italy was more complex than elsewhere because of the coexistence within some universities of two apparently opposed approaches to language: late scholastic logic and humanism. The new, more technical, logic of the fourteenth century was a product of northern universities, especially of Paris and Oxford, which came to Italy comparatively late in its development, from the mid-fourteenth century onwards.<sup>25</sup> This logic, associated with the names of Scotus (c.1265-1308), Burley (c.1275-1345), Ockham (c.1285-1349), Buridan (c.1295- after 1358), Billingham (fl. 1344-1361), Heytesbury (before 1313-1373) and Strode (fl. 1360-1387) was cultivated in Italy long after it ceased to be popular in the north.<sup>26</sup> The great names of Italian late scholastic logic, Paul of Venice (d. 1429), who studied in Oxford between 1390 and 1393, Paul of Pergola (d. 1455) and Gaetano of Thiene (1387-1465) were active in the early and mid-fifteenth century. Some of the characteristic doctrines of the late scholastic logicians, Billingham, Strode and Heytesbury, (such as *probatio propositionis*) feature largely (along with supposition, consequences, obligations and *insolubilia*) in Paul of Venice's *Logica parva*, which was an important textbook in Italy throughout the fifteenth century.<sup>27</sup>

Although scholastic logic took Aristotelian logic for its starting point, it developed several new areas of interest and specialization. It was concerned with the metaphysical basis of logic, attempting to make sense of what Aristotle had said about the relationship between language and the world. Logicians tried to determine how much language described real objects and distinctions and how much it produced a metalanguage with which to analyse language and thought.<sup>28</sup> Scholastic logicians were also interested in the way in which particular words in propositions signified concepts and realities. They observed the effect of the arrangement of the

---

<sup>25</sup> W. J. Courtenay, 'The Early Stages in the Introduction of Oxford Logic into Italy', in A. Maierù ed., *English Logic in Italy in the 14th and 15th Centuries* (Naples, 1982), pp. 13-32, esp. pp. 13, 23.

<sup>26</sup> A thematic discussion of late scholastic logic, with particular attention to fifteenth century Italian logicians is A. Maierù, *Terminologia logica della tarda scolastica* (Rome, 1972). Also J. Pinborg ed., *The Logic of John Buridan* (Copenhagen, 1976), P. O. Lewry ed., *The Rise of British Logic* (Toronto, 1985).

<sup>27</sup> Paulus Venetus, *Logica parva* (Venice, 1472; reprinted Hildesheim, 1970). There is a translation, with introduction, by A. Perreiah (Munich, 1984). C. Vasoli, 'La Logica', in G. Arnaldi and M. Pastore Stocchi ed., *Storia della cultura Veneta*, vol 3/III (Vicenza, 1981), pp. 35-73, especially pp. 37-50.

<sup>28</sup> The articles by M. M. Adams, J. F. Boler and C. Knudsen in *CHLMP* are good starting points, also J. Pinborg, *Logik und Semantik im Mittelalter* (Stuttgart, 1972) and G. Leff, *William of Ockham* (Manchester, 1975).

proposition on the way in which a term stands for a thing or a class of things in the world (supposition theory)<sup>29</sup> and they inquired into the properties of the words which stand alongside terms in propositions (*syncategoremata*).<sup>30</sup> They developed a doctrine of consequences, which analysed different types of inference between premise and conclusion, and tried to establish and prove rules of inference.<sup>31</sup> They studied the sophisms intensively and attempted to establish rules for resolving the ambiguities involved. Separate treatises were devoted to two types of sophism, *insolubilia* and composition and division.<sup>32</sup> In *probatio propositionis* they tried to analyse the implications or the truth conditions of different types of proposition.<sup>33</sup> They composed treatises on obligations, which discussed the rules and tactics of scholastic disputation.<sup>34</sup>

Characteristic of these endeavours were: a considerable rigour and attention to detail, a strict formalism which gave no consideration to the context or purpose of the sentences chosen for study, staunch criticism of previous authors combined with an attempt to amend and improve their ideas, and a willingness to invent new terminology or to develop specialised meanings for existing words. All these aspects are characteristic of what we would now describe as a scientific, or a research, approach to language. No one person contributed to all parts of the subject. Scholastic logic existed and developed as a result of controversy and the exchange of ideas. Many of the doctrines arose from the context of disputation and from the problem of understanding and resolving different kinds of sophisms. In that sense they represent a concentration of interest in one of the areas of

<sup>29</sup> Peter of Spain, *Tractatus*, pp. 79-83 offers an introduction to supposition theory, as the work does generally to medieval work on sophisms and properties of terms. Also P. V. Spade, 'The Semantics of Terms', L. M. De Rijk, 'Origins of the Theory of the Properties of Terms', *CHLMP*, pp. 188-196, 161-173, *Logica Modernorum*, 2 vols in 3 (Assen, 1962-67), vol 2 part 1, pp. 560-598.

<sup>30</sup> *Tractatus*, pp. 209-232, N. Kretzmann, *William of Sherwood's 'Syncategorematic Words'* (Minneapolis, 1968), 'Syncategoremeta, exponibilia, sophismata', *CHLMP*, pp. 211-245.

<sup>31</sup> I. Boh, 'Consequences', *CHLMP*, pp. 300-314, E. A. Moody, *Truth and Consequence in Medieval Logic* (Dordrecht, 1953).

<sup>32</sup> *Tractatus*, pp.115-161, W. Heytesbury, *Tractatus de senso composito et diviso Regulae eiusdem cum Sophismatibus...* (Venice, 1494), P. V. Spade, 'Insolubilia', *CHLMP*, pp. 246-253 and his numerous studies there cited, Perreiah, n. 27 above, pp. 99-108.

<sup>33</sup> A. Maierù, 'Lo Speculum puerorum sive terminus est in quem di Riccardo Billingham', *Studi Medievali*, 3a serie, X (1969), A Giuseppe Ermini, III, pp. 297-397, *Terminologia Logica*, pp. 431-483, L. M. De Rijk ed., *Some 14th Century Tracts on the Probationes Terminorum* (Nijmegen, 1982).

<sup>34</sup> E. Stump, P. V. Spade, 'Obligations', *CHLMP*, pp. 315-41, Perreiah, n. 27 above, pp. 83-98.

logic. But the problem sentences they discuss have implications which touch on much broader questions of semantics and even of physics.<sup>35</sup> Instead of creating a network which determines the way the most basic elements of language (the individual sounds) should be built into extended arguments (as Aristotle had), they attempted rather to explain particular difficult or anomalous sentences in the existing language system, in the expectation that the methods which could cope with them would be valid in all other cases.

Late scholastic logic was a specialised field of enquiry. Its difficulty and technicality is a consequence of its attempt to give a rigorous account of difficulties in natural language. Logicians who are satisfied to regard the form 'A is B' as the paradigm for all language will not encounter the problems the late scholastic logicians tried to solve. Modern theoretical linguists could easily respect the scholastics' attempts to produce rigorous descriptions of the ambiguities of natural language or to specify the propositions implied in a proposition made complex by the presence of particular words or types of construction. Like Chomsky's analysis of 'flying planes',<sup>36</sup> their analyses occasionally move the historical linguist to wonder whether the rigour might not be deceptive and the methods of resolution disproportionate to the importance of the problem. Sometimes the effect of commentary and disputation seems to be further to elaborate doctrines which are flawed or limited.

This imported logic coexisted in Italian universities with the growth of humanism. In fact in some ways humanism actually preceded scholastic logic. Paduan teachers of *dictamen* like Rolandino (d.1276), Lovato Lovati (1246-1309) and Albertino Mussato (1261-1329) were reading classical prose and poetry and composing poems and histories imitating and echoing their reading in the late thirteenth century, whereas Padua's eminence as a centre of scholastic logic dated from the later fourteenth century.<sup>37</sup>

---

<sup>35</sup> C. Wilson, *William Heytesbury* (Madison, 1956), pp. 3, 9, 21-24 and *passim*.

<sup>36</sup> N. Chomsky, 'Three models for the description of language', *I.R.E. Transactions on Information Theory*, vol IT-2, *Syntactic Structures* (The Hague, 1957), p.87.

<sup>37</sup> P. O. Kristeller's classic 1945 article on the connection between *dictamen* and the growth of humanism, and the coincidence of early humanism and scholastic logic is now available in his *Renaissance Thought and Its Sources* (New York, 1979), pp. 85-105, R. Witt, 'Medieval Ars Dictaminis and the Beginnings of Humanism', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 35 (1982), pp. 1-35, R. Weiss, *The Dawn of Humanism* (London, 1947), Helen Wieruszowski, 'Rhetoric and the Classics in Italian Education of the Thirteenth Century', *Studia Gratiana*, 11 (*Collectanea Stephan Kuttner* 1) (Bologna, 1967), pp. 169-207, G. Billanovich, 'Il preumanesimo padovano', in G. Folena ed., *Storia della cultura veneta*, 2, *Il Trecento* (Padua, 1976), pp. 19-110, J. K. Hyde, *Padua in the Age of Dante* (Manchester,

Humanists continued to hold university posts but the growth of humanism owed as much or more to the inspiration of private individuals, like Petrarch (1304-1374), and to the support of princes and government officials. Thus, although Greek teaching was re-established in the west by the appointment of Chrysoloras to the University of Florence (1397-1400), it mainly flourished as a result of the activities of chancery officials, like Bruni (1370-1444) and Poggio (1380-1459), and of the court school run by Guarino (1374-1460) in Verona (1418-1429) and Ferrara (1429-1460). And in Latin learning too, at least in the early years of the fifteenth century, the work of university teachers, like Gasparino Barzizza (c. 1360-1430) was equalled or outweighed by the work of court officials.<sup>38</sup>

Humanism in this period largely followed the pattern which Petrarch had established in his studies.<sup>39</sup> Humanists were interested in classical Latin literature. They attempted to write Latin according to what they saw as classical norms of style. They collected facts about antiquity. They tried to discover and collate new manuscripts in order to obtain fresh classical texts and to improve the texts of those works they already possessed. The earlier generation of humanists wrote Latin poetry and plays, but the leading humanists of the early fifteenth century composed histories, or works of moral philosophy (that is to say, works of practical importance) as well as translations. Their devotion to the ancient world was often combined with enthusiasm for the active life, and with literary or philological interests.<sup>40</sup>

The point to emphasize, though, is that humanism and late scholastic logic, models of language study which seem to us so opposed, effectively

---

1966), pp. 283-308.

<sup>38</sup> R. G. Witt, *Hercules at the Crossroads. The Life, Works, and Thought of Coluccio Salutati* (Durham, North Carolina, 1985), E. Garin, 'La letteratura degli umanisti', in E. Cecchi and N. Sapegno eds., *Storia della letteratura Italiana*, vol. 3, *Il Quattrocento e l'Ariosto* (Milan, 1966), pp. 7-315 (pp. 7-40). R. G. G. Mercer, *The Teaching of Gasparino Barzizza* (London, 1979), G.W. Pigman III, 'Barzizza's Studies of Cicero', *Rinascimento*, n.s. 21 (1981), pp. 121-63..

<sup>39</sup> N. Mann, *Petrarch* (Oxford, 1984), pp. 10-35, Petrarch, *Familiares*, 1.7, 8, 9, *Seniles*, 2.3, 15.1.

<sup>40</sup> In addition to the books in nn. 37 and 38 above: R. Sabbadini, *Storia del Ciceronianismo* (Turin, 1886), *Le scoperte dei codici latini e greci ne' secoli XIV e XV*, 2 vols. (Florence 1905-14, reprinted Florence, 1967), H. Gray, 'Renaissance Humanism: The Pursuit of Eloquence', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 24 (1963), pp. 497-514, J. E. Seigel, *Rhetoric and Philosophy in Renaissance Humanism* (Princeton, 1968), J. O. Ward, 'Renaissance Commentators on Ciceronian Rhetoric', in J. J. Murphy ed., *Renaissance Eloquence* (Berkeley, 1983), pp. 127-173, C. B. Schmitt et al. ed., *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1988), J. Monfasani, 'Humanism and Rhetoric', in A. Rabil jr. ed., *Renaissance Humanism: Foundations, Forms and Legacy*, 3 vols. (Philadelphia, 1988), III, pp. 171-235.

co-existed in Italian universities. The dialecticians pursued their preoccupations with intricate problems of signification and inference, while the rhetoricians proclaimed a return to the standards of classical Latinity. This division is not at all inconsistent with the history of the *trivium*. We have seen that dialectic can develop as a science as well as serving as a training, that rhetoric can pursue the writing of the past as well as the practical persuasion of the present, and that the *trivium* is capable of sponsoring unexpected combinations between the two of them. Even so the moment was ripe for a reassessment of the relationship between rhetoric and dialectic. In the remaining sections of this chapter I shall outline humanist attitudes to Aristotelian and scholastic dialectic and look at what the humanists did when they read their classical texts.

### *Humanists and Dialectic*

In a letter to Tommaso Caloria, Petrarch criticized those who spend their time in empty dialectical disputes, although he recognised that a less self-involved kind of dialectic had a part to play in education. He attacked the *barbari Britanni*, who dominated recent dialectic, but he understood the necessity for Aristotelian logic, provided it was regarded as a skill to be used in other subjects rather than an end in itself.<sup>41</sup> Coluccio Salutati took up a very similar position, understanding the importance of dialectic as a skill, but attacking it when it became too technical and too barbarous in its language.<sup>42</sup> Leonardo Bruni, too, in his *Dialogus ad Petrum Paulum Histrum*, which asserts the general intellectual value of disputation, contrasts the worthwhile philosophy of the ancients, including Aristotle, with the folly and barbarism of contemporary Aristotelians.<sup>43</sup>

These attacks did not prevent Italians, even those devoted to humanist grammar and rhetoric, from studying scholastic logic. Filelfo (1398-1481) writes with equal appreciation of the afternoons he spent studying with Paul of Venice as of the mornings with Barzizza.<sup>44</sup> Cesare Vasoli has drawn

---

<sup>41</sup> Petrarch, *Familiares*, I.7.

<sup>42</sup> Salutati, *De laboribus Herculis*, ed. B. L. Ullman, 2 vols. (Zurich, 1951), I, pp. 3-5, R. G. Witt, *Hercules*, pp. 219-220.

<sup>43</sup> E. Garin ed., *Prosatori latini del quattrocento* (Milan, 1952), pp. 44-99 (54-61).

<sup>44</sup> Unedited letter from Codex Trivulzianus cited by C. De' Rosmini, *Vita di Francesco Filelfo*, vol. I (Milan, 1808), p. 6: 'Extraordinariis vero diebus, audiebam mane oratoriam docentam disertissimum rhetora Gasparinum Bergomenensem. Nam post prandium operam dabam philosophiae sub eruditissimo doctissimoque philosopho Paulo Veneto ordinis Eremitanorum, cuius et in dialecticis et in universa philosophia extant volumina quamplures peracute excogitata elucubrataque subtilissime....' I am grateful to Jill Kraye for this reference.

attention to other humanist sympathizers who praise scholastic logic.<sup>45</sup>

Against this background Valla's attitude to logic, rejecting Aristotle and Boethius as well as the *barbari Britanni* and scholastic philosophers, must appear very radical. In fact some of his criticisms echo his predecessors: barbarity of language, over-complication, self-absorption, and lack of usefulness; but he presses them much harder and he goes on to attack the whole Aristotelian system. The approach of George of Trebizond's (1395-c.1472) *Isagoge dialectica* is more in tune with Petrarch and Bruni. George provides a short account of the subject matter of Aristotelian logic from the predicables to the syllogism, adding sections on definition and division, and on the technique of disputation (obligations). Apart from this last treatise, he avoids medieval accretions to the dialectic syllabus, and he aims at a cultivated style. He also analyses examples of arguments from Cicero's speeches. Completed around 1440, *Isagoge dialectica* did not circulate widely in the fifteenth century, but it was often printed in northern Europe in the sixteenth century.<sup>46</sup> The success of the work is probably due to its simplicity and conservatism.

The development of humanism provoked a reconsideration of the object of dialectic and a reform of the relationship between rhetoric and dialectic. Some humanists accepted late scholastic logic as it stood. Others approved of Aristotelian dialectic, but wanted to purify its use of Latin. Valla wanted to dispense with metaphysics, disputation, linguistic formalism, and the whole institution of Aristotelian dialectic.

### *Humanists and Literary Texts*

Humanist teachers always emphasized the moral and practical benefits to be gained from reading ancient literature. But although this interest in classical literature was constitutive of humanism, the humanists' approach to their literary texts is to date a neglected subject.<sup>47</sup> The brief discussion of four

<sup>45</sup> C. Vasoli, *La dialettica e la retorica dell'Umanesimo* (Milan, 1968), pp. 20-23, also pp. 9-27, and A. R. Perreiah, 'Humanist critiques of scholastic dialectic', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 13 (1982), pp. 3-22.

<sup>46</sup> *Isagoge dialectica* is the usual title, but I used *De re dialectica* (Cologne, 1539, reprinted Frankfurt, 1966). J. Monfasani, *George of Trebizond* (Leiden, 1976), hereafter Monfasani, pp. 301-4, 328-337. There are some quite striking similarities between points George makes and points Valla attacks. Although the chronology would be difficult (and therefore the hypothesis of common sources is the most likely), I think it would be worth investigating the possibility that, even at this stage, George is one of Valla's targets. List of editions in J. Monfasani ed., *Collectanea Trapezuntiana* (Binghamton, 1984), pp. 473-477.

<sup>47</sup> Studies which approach this subject include: R. Cardini, *La critica del Landino* (Florence, 1973), A. Grafton, 'Renaissance readers and ancient texts: comments on some

authors which follows is intended to suggest the context for the contributions of Valla and Agricola.

When Salutati justifies reading Virgil, in a letter to Giuliano Zonarini, he emphasizes the beauty of his style and the profundity of his thought, but he also argues that Virgil was divinely inspired and that Christian doctrine is embedded in the *Aeneid*. Elsewhere he often used allegory to explain narrative elements from Virgil and Seneca in a moral way.<sup>48</sup>

Antonio Loschi's (1368-1441)<sup>49</sup> *Inquisitio super XI orationes Ciceronis*, composed in the 1390s at the Visconti court, was very widely diffused in manuscript and was often printed, sometimes as part of an omnibus volume with the commentaries of his imitator Sicco Polenton, George of Trebizond's commentary on *Pro Ligario*, and Asconius Paedianus's historical commentary on five of Cicero's orations.<sup>50</sup>

In his preface, Loschi strongly asserts the importance and value of eloquence. He divides his commentary into six sections. He begins with the argument, which briefly explains the context and the aim of the whole speech. Then he assigns its class (judicial, deliberative or demonstrative). In the third place he analyses the status of the speech and in the fourth comments on the order of its parts (disposition). The fifth section divides the speech into its parts and describes the contents of each part, with particular attention to the topics of argument. Finally he deals with style, by discussing the figures and ornaments used in cited phrases or sentences.<sup>51</sup> This last section is rather randomly organised. Its main

commentators', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 38 (1985), pp. 615-649, P. Mack, 'Rudolph Agricola's Reading of Literature', *JWCI*, 48 (1985), pp. 23-41, 'Renaissance Habits of Reading' (forthcoming), C. Kallendorf, *In Praise of Aeneas* (Hanover, New Hampshire, 1989), K. Meerhoff, 'Rhétorique néolatine et culture vernaculaire: Les analyses textuelles de Barthélémy Aneau', *Études littéraires*, 24:3 (1992), pp. 63-85. Alistair Minnis has argued convincingly that literary studies were pursued within scholasticism, but in my view the prehumanists, Petrarch, Loschi and Guarino developed new approaches. A. Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship*, 2nd edition (Aldershot, 1988), *Medieval Literary Theory*.

<sup>48</sup> F. Novati ed., *Epistolario di Coluccio Salutati*, 4 vols. (Rome, 1891-1911), I, pp. 301-303, *De laboribus Herculis*, II, pp. 588-592, 633-635, R. Witt, *Hercules*, pp. 190-193, 212-226.

<sup>49</sup> E. Garin, *Storia di Milano*, VI (Milan, 1955), pp. 550-556, Mario E. Cosenza, *Dictionary of the Italian Humanists* (Boston, 1962-67), p. 2030ff, G. da Schio, *Sulla vita e sugli scritti di Antonio Loschi* (Padua, 1858). Loschi, from Verona, studied with Salutati (before 1387), then in Pavia, was employed in the chancery at Milan (1391-1407) and later a papal secretary. R. Sabbadini, *La scuola*, n. 54 below, p. 59.

<sup>50</sup> In *Orationes Ciceronis enarrationes Q. A. Paediani, G. Trapezuntii et A. Luschi* (Venice 1477). I have also seen editions of this type from Florence, 1519; Paris, 1520; Strasbourg, 1520 and Venice, 1522. See Monfasani, *Collectanea Trapezuntiana*, pp. 463-464.

<sup>51</sup> Loschi, ed. cit. in previous note, 5<sup>r</sup>.

function seems to be the labelling of particular tropes, sometimes with discussion appended.

Although the sixth section unquestionably treats the speech as a collection of fragments, the combination of sections one and three, the argument and the status, with section five, the contents of each part, can be very successful in showing the unity and the cumulative effect of the speech. The summary of each part is greatly strengthened when it is informed by an awareness of the purpose of the whole, as for example it is in the comments on the closing sections of *Pro Milone*.<sup>52</sup> In the commentary on the first two orations treated (*Pro Lege Manilia* and *Pro Milone*) Loschi recapitulates a good deal of basic rhetorical theory (e.g. how to determine status, the five parts of rhetorical argumentation, the qualities sought in the narration)<sup>53</sup> before applying it to the speech under consideration. This gives his book some of the character of a manual even though it takes the form and contains the matter of a series of commentaries. Sometimes his recapitulations of the manuals obscure features of the text he is commenting on.

Our information about Guarino's teaching<sup>54</sup> suggests that he devoted much of his comment to the individual words of the text. He discussed the meaning and etymology of many words, and used his discussion of particular words to pass on information about Roman customs. Thus the texts often became a pretext for supplying material about usage and meaning which reinforced or supplemented what was provided in Guarino's *Carmina differentialia* and in his lexicon.<sup>55</sup> Pupils were advised to read ancient works providing information on historical, geographical, literary and philosophical matters, such as Aulus Gellius's *Attic Nights*,

---

<sup>52</sup> Loschi, d3<sup>r</sup>-4<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>53</sup> Loschi, a5<sup>v</sup>-7<sup>v</sup>, b1<sup>v</sup>, b7<sup>r</sup>-8<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>54</sup> R. Sabbadini, *Vita di Guarino Veronese* (Genova, 1891), *La scuola e gli studi di Guarino Veronese* (Catania, 1896), reprinted together as *Guariniana* (Turin, 1964). Guarino Veronese, *Epistolario*, ed. R. Sabbadini, 3 vols., (Venice, 1915-1919), W. H. Woodward, *Studies in Education during the Age of the Renaissance 1400-1600* (Cambridge, 1906), pp. 26-47. I have used the documents (an edition of Baptista Guarino's *De ordine docendi et discendi* and selections from Guarino's letters) in E. Garin ed., *Il pensiero pedagogico dello Umanesimo* (Florence, 1958), hereafter *Pensiero*, pp. 306-471. Interpretative accounts: E. Garin, *Ritratti di umanisti* (Florence, 1967); A. Grafton and L. Jardine, *From Humanism to the Humanities* (London, 1986), pp. 1-28 give an admirable discussion of Guarino's methods. Their conclusions are too harsh, however. A good deal of what Guarino teaches has to be seen as necessary information, of a preliminary kind, which permits the pupil to read and be taught by the text itself.

<sup>55</sup> Grafton and Jardine, pp. 10-20, *Pensiero*, pp. 498-499, R. Sabbadini, *Il metodo degli umanisti* (Florence, 1920), pp. 43-44.

Macrobius's *Saturnalia*, Pliny's *Natural History* and St Augustine's *City of God*.<sup>56</sup> In all their reading, which was to include all the Roman historians and poets, they were to write down in a notebook the information and particular expressions which seemed to them most worth recording. This would spare them the labour of rereading books. Everything they read or learned was to be discussed with their fellow students. The students were always to think of themselves as learned men in the making, liable to have to give account of what they had found out.<sup>57</sup>

Guarino's methods reveal a passion for facts about antiquity, a concern for linguistic distinctions, and above all a preoccupation with the application of one's reading. The subject matter and the expressions of classical literature are to be held ready for employment in the pupil's own compositions.<sup>58</sup> Although this can lead to reading a text in fragments rather than as a whole, it also seems to indicate an interrogation of the text as it is read. In deciding whether or not to record a phrase or fact, the pupil must continually ask: what would this be useful for? what heading would it go under? Battista Guarino comments that Valerius Maximus should be the first of the historians to be read because he shows clearly how history provides moral examples. In similar terms Guarino da Verona advises his friend Tobia del Borgo that the sole purpose of history is to tell the truth in such a way as to make the reader's mind wiser and to encourage the imitation of virtuous examples. He also advises him to acquire technical information about the geography of the places involved and the tactics of the battles. However, he makes it clear that this information is not an end in itself but serves the purpose of clarity in exposition (itself subsidiary to the aim of moral and intellectual teaching).<sup>59</sup>

In this side of Guarino's practice, books are read for the sake of the pupil's own writing and conversation. They are repositories of material which can be reused, and whose possession marks the owner as cultivated. In the rhetorical tradition too, the best writers are used in education as models of how to apply the precepts. Neither of these uses excludes the possibility of other readings for pleasure and instruction. Indeed it is their readability, their success in pleasing and teaching, which makes the technical aspects of the best authors worthy of imitation.

---

<sup>56</sup> *Pensiero*, pp. 456, 460.

<sup>57</sup> *Pensiero*, pp. 380-382, 458-460.

<sup>58</sup> This is reflected also in Agricola's remarks on studying and writing for oneself. *Lucubrationes* (Cologne, 1539), p. 198.

<sup>59</sup> *Pensiero*, pp. 382-394, 454.

George of Trebizond's *Rheticorum libri V* (1433 or 1434) presents the whole syllabus of rhetorical doctrines, adding to the basic structure of *Rhetorica ad Herennium* material from Hermogenes and other Greek sources which were unknown in the West.<sup>60</sup> One of the things which is most striking about George's rhetoric is the very extensive use he makes of examples from poetry, and fictitious cases. It has been suggested that George was writing a commentary on Cicero as well as a manual.<sup>61</sup>

Many of his citations are merely illustrative instances. Quite often his task was to find a Latin example to illustrate a Greek rhetorical doctrine. Monfasani has shown that George's comments are sometimes directed against observations which Quintilian or Loschi had made on the same passage. His *De artificio Ciceronis orationis Pro Q. Ligario* (1440) was chiefly written to defend his opinion that its *exordium* was not ironic. George begins by setting out the context and argument of the speech. Then he describes its status, invention, disposition and style, summarising Greek rhetorical teaching about invention and style where appropriate.<sup>62</sup>

In *Rheticorum Libri V* he considers examples from poetry as well as oratory. While discussing how to practise *indignatio*, the arousing of hatred or resentment, George suggests that all the particular circumstances of the act in question should be mentioned.

And in fact the peroration which is managed by means of *indignatio* or *conquestio* pursues an almost poetic style. Just as the poets amplify the matter more with the manner than with other circumstances, so in these cases, the orator mingling the manner with all the circumstances both amplifies the speech considerably and moves his hearers. That the poets use this kind of style by amplifying single things in their particular manner, that distinguished poet Virgil everywhere shows.

Arma virumque cano, Troiae qui primus ab oris  
Italiam fato profugus Lavinaque venit  
litora, multum ille et terris iactatus et alto  
vi superum.

For here immediately from the beginning it is evident how he concentrates on single things. When he says 'profugus', 'et terris iactatus et alto' and 'multa quoque et bello passus', he amplifies single things with their manner; he also adds causes to manners when he confirms that he was

<sup>60</sup> George of Trebizond, *Rheticorum libri V* (Venice, 1523), hereafter RLV, Monfasani, pp. 261-289, *Collectanea Trapezuntiana*, pp. 459-462.

<sup>61</sup> Monfasani, pp. 265, 290.

<sup>62</sup> Q. Asconii Paediani in *Orationes M. Tullii Ciceronis Enarrationes...cum Georgii Trapezuntii in eiusdem Ciceronis Orationem pro Q. Ligario...* (Paris, 1520), Monfasani, pp. 38, 290-292.

affected 'fato', 'vi superum', and 'memorem Iunonis ob iram'.<sup>63</sup>

George picks out details from the passage he has quoted to show that Virgil follows the principle of amplification which he has set out.

George is also aware of the problems involved in handling examples. Towards the end of his discussion of the *exordium* he recalls that part of the orator's art is to conceal art. In order to illustrate his points he will have to detract a little from the impressiveness of the oration and reveal its art. In other words, he works from a skeleton plan. At the end of the section he quotes the whole of the *exordium* of the *Pro Marcello*, with two interruptions to show its structure. He expects that everything he has said before will be understood best from this *exordium* of Cicero's. The reader will be able to discover by independent study that all Cicero's other *exordia* also conform to George's precepts.<sup>64</sup>

At the end of his discussion of argument, he considers a passage from *Pro Milone* in which Cicero prepares for the main line of his defence by arguing that there are occasions on which one may justifiably kill a man, and that defending oneself in an ambush is one of them. The passage begins when Cicero repeats his opponents' contention that it is unlawful to allow life to anyone who confesses that he has killed another man (3,7) and ends when he concludes that a person who lays ambushes may lawfully be killed (4,11).

George quotes the whole passage, breaking it up with comments on the topics from which Cicero's arguments are drawn (previous judgements, customs, notable instances from history and myth, the wording of various laws), the way in which the arguments are put and the way they fit together into a proof.

But it also occurs to me, from this sequence of reasoning that a single argumentative structure can be composed out of all the topics of any status.<sup>65</sup>

---

<sup>63</sup> *RLV*, 42<sup>v</sup>: 'etenim peroratio, quae per indignationem, aut conquestionem tractatur, poetum fere dicendi modum insequitur. ut enim poetae modo magis materiam quam alios circumstantiis ampliant, ita in iis orator modum cunctis circumstantiis inserens vehementer et orationem amplificat, et auditores movet. quod autem poetae hoc dicendi genere utantur, singula modo suo amplificando, eximus ille poeta Virgilius ubique ostendit [*Aeneid* 1, 1-4].

nam hic statim a principio, quemadmodum in singulis insistat, manifestum est. cum et profugum, et iactatum terra, ac mari dicat, multa quoque et bello passum, modo singula amplificat, causas quoque modis addit, cum fato et vi superum, et memorem Iunonis ob iram ita contigisse confirmet.'

<sup>64</sup> *RLV*, 4<sup>v</sup>-5<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>65</sup> *RLV*, 41<sup>v</sup>-42<sup>r</sup>: 'Verum ex hoc ratiocinationis ordine illud etiam mihi in mentem venit ex omnibus locis alicuius status unicam argumentationem componi posse.'

The example George has chosen is certainly a *tour de force* of Cicero's ingenuity, and the comments help bring out what is going on, though there is certainly much more that could be said. George is right to draw particular attention to the way the arguments are put together, but he goes too far in calling them a single argumentative structure. Rather they are a series of argumentative structures (in which the form is mostly implicit) which drive at related points. By not making this distinction George misses the way Cicero's argument, by appearing tightly constructed, actually glides over some rather doubtful inferences. Cicero's general conclusion is much too broad for what he has actually proved. In the same way he inserts the making of ambushes as a sufficient condition in a way which has very little to do with the examples he adduces in support. George also makes use of worked examples, in which he relates the background of a particular case, and then discusses the way in which it might be argued. These worked examples occur particularly in the sections on the different kinds of status. The most common example, to which he returns again and again (and which Cicero had used in *De inventione*) is the defence of Orestes charged with the murder of Clytemnestra.<sup>66</sup> Such examples are related to declamation themes from the late antique schools.<sup>67</sup>

The practices and opinions of these four authors illustrate different possibilities in humanist readings of texts. Some teachers and commentators used their texts as a pretext for discussing facts about antiquity, sometimes basic, sometimes arcane; some used them as an opportunity to display philological acumen, solving problems of text and lexis in difficult authors.<sup>68</sup> Some used them as illustrations of the principles of rhetoric (dealing with larger structures as well as with points of detail). Some treated their texts as repositories of material and expression for reuse, and some used them for moral teaching, either by extracting pithy moral statements or *exempla*, or by allegorical interpretations of works or episodes.<sup>69</sup> Later renaissance readings are more concerned with logical structure. Following Agricola they employ techniques and vocabulary from dialectic.

<sup>66</sup> *RLV*, 7<sup>v</sup>, 11<sup>v</sup>, 12<sup>r</sup>, 23<sup>r-v</sup> etc.

<sup>67</sup> *RLV*, 6<sup>r</sup>, 8<sup>v</sup>, 12<sup>r-v</sup>, 17<sup>r</sup>, 25<sup>r</sup>, 26<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>68</sup> A. Grafton and L. Jardine, *From Humanism*, pp. 58-63, 83-98.

<sup>69</sup> R. Cardini, *La critica*, pp. 34-52, P.R. Hardie, *Humanist Exegesis of Poetry in Fifteenth-Century Italy and the Medieval Tradition of Commentary* (M. Phil Thesis, Warburg Institute, London, 1976). C. Kallendorf, 'Cristoforo Landino's *Aeneid* and the Humanist Critical Tradition', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 36 (1983), pp. 519-546, *In Praise of Aeneas*.

## CHAPTER TWO

### VALLA'S *REPASTINATIO DIALECTICAE ET PHILOSOPHIAE*

Lorenzo Valla was famous in his own time for his knowledge of Latin and Greek, his quarrelsomeness and his unusual opinions. For the sixteenth century he was the revered author of *Elegantiae linguae Latinae*,<sup>1</sup> the authoritative guide to Latin usage, and the first humanist to work on the text of the *New Testament*. To recent scholars Valla has appeared to be the great original thinker of the early fifteenth century, a radical religious philosopher, and the scourge of the Aristotelian establishment.<sup>2</sup> The next four chapters are concerned with his equally radical contribution to renaissance education in the use of language, and in particular with *Repastinatio dialecticae et philosophiae*, in which he attacks the basic tenets of Aristotelian philosophy and proposes drastic reforms in dialectic.

Lorenzo Valla completed the first version of *Repastinatio dialecticae et philosophiae* in 1439.<sup>3</sup> For the previous five years he had been employed by Alfonso the Magnanimous, who was attempting to take possession of Naples.<sup>4</sup> He had accompanied Alfonso on his campaigns and had spent

---

<sup>1</sup> *Elegantiae* was among the texts to be lectured on at Corpus Christi College, Oxford, T. Fowler, *History of Corpus Christi College* (Oxford, 1893), p. 39, J. IJsewijn - G. Tournoy, 'Nuovi contributi per l'elenco dei manoscritti e delle edizioni delle *Elegantiae* di Lorenzo Valla', *Humanistica Lovaniensia*, 18 (1969), pp. 25-41, 20 (1971), pp. 1-5, A. Sottili, 'Notizie sul "Nachleben" di Valla tra umanesimo e riforma', in O. Besomi and M. Regoliosi eds, *Lorenzo Valla e l'umanesimo italiano* (Padua, 1986), pp. 329-364.

<sup>2</sup> G. Radetti, 'La religione di Lorenzo Valla', in *Medioevo e Rinascimento, Studi in onore di Bruno Nardi* (Florence, 1955), II, pp. 595-620, C. Trinkaus, *In Our Image and Likeness* (London, 1970), pp. 103-170, D. R. Kelley, *Foundations of Modern Historical Scholarship* (New York, 1970), ch. 2, A. Grafton, *Joseph Scaliger*, I (Oxford, 1983), pp. 9-14.

<sup>3</sup> L. Valla, *Repastinatio dialecticae et philosophiae*, ed. G. Zippel (Padua, 1982), hereafter *RDP*, pp. x-xii. I shall be citing from this edition throughout. Pages 1-356 contain the third recension of the text, pages 357-598 the first version. See the review by J. Monfasani, *Rivista di letteratura italiana*, 2 (1984), pp. 177-194.

<sup>4</sup> The main biographical sources are the letters, now edited with commentary by O. Besomi and M. Regoliosi, *Epistolae* (Padua, 1984) and 'Antidotum secundum' in *Opera Omnia* (Basel, 1540, repr. Turin, 1962), I, pp. 331-366 (where it is called *Antidotum*, book 4). Other documents are printed in the biographies I have used, which are: R. Sabbadini, 'Cronologia documentata della vita di Lorenzo Valla', in L. Barozzi, R. Sabbadini, *Studi sul Panormita e sul Valla* (Florence, 1891), repr. in L. Valla, *Opera Omnia*, II (Turin, 1962),

eighteen months in exile after being captured by the Milanese. In the preface to book five of the *Elegantiae* he writes of nearly four years of continual movement, of lacking books, leisure time and the company of learned men and of his efforts to study at every opportunity so as at least not to lose learning.<sup>5</sup> In these years, astonishingly, he completed most of his major works. By 1440 he had written *De falso credita et ementita Constantini donatione*, which demonstrates that the document which is the basis of papal claims to temporal sovereignty is a forgery. He finished the first versions of *Elegantiae* in 1441 and of *De collatione Novi Testamenti*, in which he points out mistakes in the Vulgate translation of the *New Testament* and indicates some of the the weaknesses in the Greek text which lies behind it, in 1443.<sup>6</sup> Together these works represent the most original intellectual contribution of the early fifteenth century. They were not the only ones which he completed in these troubled years.

But Valla's attainments had never been ordinary, nor his life easy. He was born in Rome in 1407 into a family of Piacentine origin closely connected to the papal curia. Beyond the elementary stage of education he was almost entirely self-taught, though he writes with gratitude of brief contacts with such visiting scholars as Giovanni Aurispa and Leonardo Bruni. Between about 1424 and 1427 he had Greek lessons from Rinuccio di Castiglione.<sup>7</sup> In 1428 he circulated his first important work, *De comparatione Ciceronis Quintilianique*, to the humanists of the papal court, Antonio Loschi, Poggio Bracciolini and Cincio de Rustici. The work is now lost but Panormita tells us that the comparison was greatly to Quintilian's advantage. At the time this was an extremely provocative view, especially when it was put forward by such a young man. Valla's next work, the dialogue *De voluptate* (which in later versions was entitled *De vero bono*) was originally set in the humanist circle of the papal court. In this work the Stoic moral position, which many humanists adopted in imitation of Cicero and Seneca, is subjected to a devastating attack from an Epicurean point of view. Both pagan philosophies are then, in book 3,

---

hereafter *Cron.*, G. Mancini, *Vita di Lorenzo Valla* (Florence, 1891), M. Fois, *Il pensiero cristiano di Lorenzo Valla* (Rome, 1969), hereafter Fois, S. I. Camporeale, *Lorenzo Valla: umanesimo e teologia* (Florence, 1972), L. Valla, *Antidotum Primum*, ed. A. Wesseling (Assen, 1978), pp. 1-54, hereafter Wesseling. See also the additional letters discovered by M. Davies in O. Besomi, *Lorenzo Valla e l'umanesimo italiano*, pp. 94-106. *Cron.*, p. 74, *Epistolae*, pp. 151, 157-160, 191, Mancini, p. 90.

<sup>5</sup> *Opera omnia*, I, p. 160.

<sup>6</sup> *Cron.*, pp. 79, 83-88, *Epistolae*, pp. 151-160, 171-190, Fois, pp. 170-174.

<sup>7</sup> *Cron.*, pp. 50-54, Fois, pp. 3-11.

refuted by a Christian vision of the redemption of man's corruption. In 1430, Valla's uncle, Melchior Scrivani, died of plague and Valla, who had no hesitation in proclaiming himself more learned, sought the apostolic secretaryship Scrivani had occupied. Martin V denied him, because of the protests of Poggio and Loschi, and because he considered him too young.<sup>8</sup>

Early in 1431 Valla moved to Pavia, where he at first taught privately. From November he lectured in rhetoric at the university in place of Gasparino Barzizza. He worked there until 1433, moving on because of hostilities he had aroused in the law faculty by his attack on the language of Bartolus and the jurists, in his work *De insigniis et armis*. His experience at Pavia and his antipathy to the Aristotelian domination of the arts faculty stimulated him to write *Repastinatio dialecticae et philosophiae*.<sup>9</sup>

After Alfonso captured Naples in 1443, Valla continued in his service as a court humanist. He was particularly involved with history (both in his philological work on the text of Livy and in his history of the deeds of Alfonso's father). He also found time to teach rhetoric and to engage in quarrels with his fellow humanists, Panormita, Antonio da Rho and Bartolomeo Fazio. He was also compelled to defend some passages from *De vero bono* and *Repastinatio* in the inquisition trial which his enemies arranged against him in 1444.<sup>10</sup>

In 1447 he returned to Rome to become an apostolic scriptor.<sup>11</sup> He continued to teach rhetoric, translated Thucydides and Herodotus, and renewed his enmity with Poggio, who was still an apostolic secretary, in a series of unedifying polemics.<sup>12</sup> In his last year he delivered the annual *Encomium S. Thomae* before the Dominicans of Santa Maria sopra Minerva. He repaid his audience by relegating their hero to fifth place among the Latin doctors. In 1455 Callistus III made him papal secretary and gave him, among other benefices, a canonry of San Giovanni in

---

<sup>8</sup> Valla, *De vero falsoque bono*, ed. M. de Panizza Lorch (Bari, 1970), *Cron.*, pp. 54-56, *Opera omnia*, I, p. 352, Wesseling, pp. 1-8.

<sup>9</sup> *Cron.*, pp. 56-67, *Epistolae*, pp. 115-124, 130. O. Besomi and M. Regoliosi, 'Una lettera inedita del Vegio al Valla', *Lorenzo Valla e l'umanesimo italiano*, pp. 83-88.

<sup>10</sup> Fois, pp. 171, 375-77, Mancini, p. 191-198, Wesseling, pp. 12-17. L. Valla, *Gesta Ferdinandii regis Aragonum*, ed. O. Besomi (Padua, 1973), p. xi, *Cron.*, p. 92, G. Zippel, 'L'autodifesa di Lorenzo Valla per il processo del inquisizione napoletana (1444)', *Italia mediaevalis et umanistica*, 13 (1970), pp. 59-94.

<sup>11</sup> *Cron.*, p. 119, Fois, p. 395.

<sup>12</sup> *Cron.*, pp. 131-132, Mancini, pp. 245-52, *Antidotum in Pogium I and II*, *Apologia pro se et contra calumniatores*, *Apologus*. Discussion of the controversies with Poggio in Wesseling, pp. 25-39.

Laterano, where he was buried in 1457.<sup>13</sup>

Valla's work would have been impossible without the new developments of the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. However self-taught he was, Valla owed some of his approach to the Latin language and his knowledge of Latin literature to the humanist circles of the *curia*. Indeed his early works were written for these groups. He could hardly have made his intellectual contribution without knowledge of Greek, which also won him employment and favour. Poggio's discovery of the complete text of Quintilian must have been an important encouragement to Valla's Quintilianism. Equally Valla depended very heavily on the support of learned patrons and on the encouragement of other scholars, especially Aurispa, Bruni, Marsuppini, Tortelli and Guarino.<sup>14</sup>

Valla was vehemently opposed to many of the trends of his time. He objected to the classicizing ethics of the humanists he knew in Rome, even though he enjoyed their discussions of ancient philosophy. He thought that scholastic theologians paid more attention to Aristotle than to the Bible. He was appalled by the methods and the language of the legal and logical establishments in Pavia. His rejection of what was then one of the most famous universities in Europe inspired many of his works.

Valla's whole career was based on the traditions of the *trivium*. He placed great emphasis on grammar, on the importance and difficulty of learning the ancient languages thoroughly. He collected manuscripts and did editorial work on them. He translated Thucydides and Herodotus. He was the first in modern times to compare the *Vulgata* translation of the *New Testament* with the Greek original. His most influential work, the *Elegantiae*, is a discussion of the use and meaning of classical Latin words. Grammar was the foundation of his other activities.

Valla saw himself as a practical and theoretical orator. His tombstone claims that he surpassed his contemporaries in eloquence.<sup>15</sup> His practical oratory was his work for Alfonso: letterwriting, historiography and composing the *Declamation on the Donation of Constantine*. He often spoke of doing philosophy in an oratorical way, and he regarded the orator

<sup>13</sup> Camporeale, *Lorenzo Valla: umanesimo*, p. 3, *Opera omnia*, II, pp. 346-52, Fois, p. 395.

<sup>14</sup> *Epistolae*, pp. 135-136, 149-150, 191-193, 209-217, 244-245, Wesseling, pp. 10-12, 23.

<sup>15</sup> *Cron.*, pp. 50-51: 'Laurentio Vallae harum aedium sacrarum canonico Alphonsi regis et pontificis maximo secretario apostolicoque scriptori qui sua aetate omnes eloquentia superavit Catherina mater filio pientissimo posuit. Vixit annos L. Obiit anno domini MCCCCCLVII calendis augusti.'

as wiser than the philosopher.<sup>16</sup> His intellectual commitment to rhetoric is shown by his continual teaching and citation of Quintilian and by his preference for active life over contemplation. Valla's reform of dialectic is partly for the benefit of rhetoric. By reducing the difficulty and importance of dialectic, he makes more room for grammar and rhetoric. But he contrasts the ubiquity of dialectic with the special uses of rhetoric. Everyone uses dialectic, but only exceptional people need to learn rhetoric.<sup>17</sup> Rhetoric is especially useful to religion. Whereas philosophy corrupts theology, rhetoric can serve it, by urging people to do good. Doing good is more important than knowledge. Where philosophical language obfuscates, rhetorical language illuminates. Rhetoric is invaluable in understanding and preaching the Scriptures, and grammar is useful in correcting them.<sup>18</sup>

*Repastinatio dialecticae et philosophiae*

In a letter of August 1441, Valla thanks Giovanni Tortelli for advising him to be more prudent in his writings. He takes the opportunity to review what he has written.

I was almost induced to agree: I mean about giving up novel opinions. But when I consider my nature and my writings, what is there that I should shrink from, what is it that you my friends advise me to flee? Since I am he who overturns all the wisdom of the ancients in my works, can I speak freely in minor matters, and yet remain silent in what I would call extraordinary opinions?

You have seen that in *De vero bono*, which deals with ethics, I disagreed with everybody: I did the same in my books *De institutione philosophiae*, in which I said that there is only one virtue, which is fortitude, that prudence is no different from malice, that there is no difference between cardinal and theological virtues, and much more of the same. Moreover just as I make fun of Boethius, not to mention others in dialectic, so I show that philosophers talk nonsense about many questions in natural science. I show that the whole of metaphysics consists in a few words, that it does not deal with things at all, but with words, and that these same words were unknown to Aristotle, thanks to his incredible dullness. I show that all these words, 'concrete', 'abstract', 'quiditas', 'essence', 'esse', and 'ens' are clearly mad and have no force. If he had understood this, he would never have offered to others such material of madness. Since I have written this,

---

<sup>16</sup> *Epistolae*, pp. 176-177, 208, *Opera omnia*, I, p. 799, *De vero falsoque bono*, ed. Lorch, pp. 14-15.

<sup>17</sup> *RDP*, pp. 175-177.

<sup>18</sup> *Opera omnia*, I, pp. 117-120, *RDP*, pp. 7-8, S. I. Camporeale, *Lorenzo Valla: umanesimo*, pp. 211-233, 302-311.

what else should I fear to write?<sup>19</sup>

In rejecting Tortelli's well-meant advice Valla boasts about what he has already dared to say. He treats *Repastinatio dialecticae et philosophiae* as the most daring of all his works, the one in which he overthrows all established opinions. He is so involved in denouncing Aristotle that he employs terms from outside the vocabulary of classical Latin.<sup>20</sup> He takes particular pride in the negative aspect of the book: whom he has laughed at and exposed, what doctrines he has rejected.

Tortelli has warned Valla that his opponents bite. Valla replies that they only bark. A real bite, and one he would reply to, would be an attempt to refute his works. In this his hope was disappointed. His opponents never attempted a serious rebuttal of his arguments. But when they accused him of heresy and other crimes, he was obliged to respond, though he never defended in detail positions from dialectic, which he regarded as irrelevant to the charge.<sup>21</sup>

Lastly, so as not to be verbose, I hardly seem to be able to compose anything in which I do not put forward something new. Otherwise I do not know why I should write at all. Except for a few poets and historians, this has always been the motive of the most learned authors.<sup>22</sup>

In Valla's view, there is no point in writing unless you are going to disagree with what has been written before. Usually he makes this defence the other way round, arguing that the learned have always felt free to disagree with each other, and pointing out how each school of philosophy established itself by criticizing the others. This is from the letter to

<sup>19</sup> *Epistolae*, pp. 214-215: 'moveor equidem et prope ad assentendum inducor: de relinquendis novis opinionibus loquor. Sed cum me ad rationem refero atque ad mea quae condidi opera, quid est quod, istuc quod vos amici admonetis fugiendum, reformidem? Qui omnem veterum sapientiam meis operibus everti, qui possum in minoribus rebus et, ut sic dicam, extraordinariis opinionibus non libere loqui? Vidisti in libris *De vero bono*, quod ad mores pertinet, me ab omnibus dissentire; quod etiam in libris *De institutione philosophie* feci, in quibus unam virtutem, quae est fortitudo, nihilque differre a prudentia malitiam, nec ullam differentiam inter cardinales theologicasque virtutes, et multa huiusmodi. Praeterea de dialectica, ita ut Boetium, nedum alios, derideam, de naturalibus somniare philosophos in plerisque ostendo. Metaphysicam totam constare in pauculis verbis, nec in rebus versari, sed in vocibus, easque voces ab Aristotele per miram hebetudinem ignorari; omniaque illa vocabula, 'concretum', 'abstractum', 'quiditas', 'essentia', 'esse', 'ens', frenetica plane esse nulliusque ponderis: quae si ille intellexisset, nunquam tantam alii insanendi materiam praebuisset. Haec ergo cum scriperim, quid scribere verebor?'

<sup>20</sup> frenetica, hebetudo.

<sup>21</sup> *Epistolae*, p. 216, and the works mentioned in notes 10 and 12 above.

<sup>22</sup> *Epistolae*, p. 216: 'Denique ut multus non sim, vix mihi videor posse componere in quo non aliquid novi afferam: alioquin nescio cur mihi scribendum esset, quemadmodum semper doctissimi quique fecerunt (nisi qui poemata aut historias scribunt).'

Giovanni Serra, which he wrote in 1440 as a preface to a selection of his works.

Who ever wrote on any science or art without criticizing his predecessors?  
What reason could there be for writing unless to correct the errors,  
omissions or excesses of others?<sup>23</sup>

Valla's claim that all authors write in order to correct others reveals his combative side. He ends the letter to Serra by claiming that he would be glad of any genuine corrections to his work and by asserting his confidence that his writings will last while those of his detractors perish.<sup>24</sup>

The attractive side of Valla here appears in his promotion of liberty of thought, his refusal of imposed authority. 'I think that whoever believes everything he reads in books, without examining carefully whether what they say is true, is very foolish'.<sup>25</sup> The unattractive side is his preparedness to go to any lengths to confute others.

In *Repastinatio dialecticae et philosophiae* the largely self-taught (and philosophically untrained) Valla is often at the very edge of his competence. Usually he prefers to think of himself as an orator or a grammarian, but here in elaborating a systematic analysis of the world he is forced to become a philosopher, even if his purpose is to abolish philosophy. When he is feeling boastful he claims it as his most daring act of destruction. This suggests that he may be more committed to the attack on Aristotle than to the elaboration of his own system, that, as in *De vero bono*, there is an element of 'arguing like an orator'.<sup>26</sup> But within the book itself he presents another image of himself, the humble fighter for truth, attacked on all sides by his opponents, and consoled only by the thought that he is fighting for Christianity and truth against all who oppose them. He is unsurprised by the opposition to his views 'since I know that there is no truth and no opinion so true that different customs and inveterate human error do not contend with it. You have only to look at the early days of our religion to see this'.<sup>27</sup> Valla's Christian humility here could hardly be more

<sup>23</sup> *Epistolae*, p. 202: 'Quis unquam de scientia quapiam atque arte composituit, quin superiores reprehenderet? Alioquin quae causa scribendi foret, nisi aliorum aut errata aut omissa aut redundantia castigandi?' This argument is also found in the preface to *RDP*, discussed in chapter 5 below.

<sup>24</sup> *Epistolae*, pp. 208-209.

<sup>25</sup> *De vero falsoque bono*, ed. Lorch, p. 195: 'Itaque stultissimum reor esse quisquis se totum libris credit et non illos an vere dicant examinat diligenter;'

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15.

<sup>27</sup> *RDP*, pp. 355-356, p. 356: 'De qua equidem minime demiror, cum sciam nullam veritatem nullamque tam veram opinionem, cui non diversa consuetudo et diutinus hominum

arrogant, but even he would be unlikely to end a work in this manner unless he meant it seriously.

Like several of Valla's theoretical works, *Repastinatio dialecticae et philosophiae* was conceived in Pavia in the early 1430s, elaborated and brought to completion in the first Neapolitan period (1435-1441) and revised for the rest of his life. Since Valla was composing *De vero bono*, *Elegantiae*, *Annotationes in Novum Testamentum*, *De libero arbitrio* and *Repastinatio* more or less simultaneously, the question naturally arises as to how far these works are connected?

In the letter to Serra quoted above, Valla mentions *Elegantiae*, 'the six books of which have deserved better of the Latin language than all who have written for the last six hundred years on grammar, rhetoric, logic, civil and canon law or the meaning of words' and three other works (*De vero bono*, *Repastinatio* and *De libero arbitrio*) which are more philosophical.<sup>28</sup> All these books are critical of the reasoning and language of philosophers after Boethius. *Elegantiae* and *Repastinatio dialecticae et philosophiae* also share methods, but the books have different purposes and different atmospheres.<sup>29</sup> *De vero bono* is extravagant and amusing (and of far higher literary quality than the others), where *Repastinatio* is systematic and controversial, and *Elegantiae* is miscellaneous and pedantic.

It can certainly be argued (as Father Camporeale has, with great distinction)<sup>30</sup> that all these works share an outlook on theology. In all of them there is a tendency to attack scholastic theology, because it is based on Aristotelian philosophy, and to promote a more rhetorical theology, whose great exemplars are St Paul and the early Church Fathers.<sup>31</sup> But this is not the main or the only interest of all these works. *Repastinatio dialecticae et philosophiae* contributes to the programme of the other works

---

error (respice modo. ad religionis nostrae primordia) obluctetur.'

<sup>28</sup> *Epistolae*, p.201: 'sex libros meos, quos dixi, melius mereri de lingua latina, quam omnes qui sexcentis iam annis vel de grammatica vel de rhetorica vel de logica vel de iure civili atque canonii vel de verborum significazione scripserunt.'

<sup>29</sup> Chapters of *Elegantiae* with obvious affinities to material discussed in *RDP*: 1.33, 2.17-19, 3.63, 4.100 and 6.34. *De vero bono*, 3.12 also refers to *RDP*. *RDP* resumes *De vero bono* in 1.10 (*RDP*, pp. 73-98, 411-418). Grammatical methods in *RDP* are discussed in chapter 5 below.

<sup>30</sup> Among the relevant works of Camporeale: 'Da Lorenzo Valla a Tomaso Moro, lo statuto umanistica della teologia', *Memorie domenicane*, n.s., 4 (1973), pp. 9-102, 'Lorenzo Valla tra medioevo e rinascimento', *idem*, n.s., 7 (1976), pp. 3-190, 'Umanesimo e teologia tra '400 e '500', *idem*, n.s., 8-9 (1977-78), pp. 411-436. This latter article serves as a brief summary of the whole argument.

<sup>31</sup> *RDP*, pp. 7-8; *Elegantiae*, IV, Preface, 'Encomium S. Thomae', *Opera omnia*, II, pp. 393-395.

but it also deals with its own subject area of philosophy (particularly metaphysics) and dialectic.<sup>32</sup>

My discussion of Valla's *Repastinatio dialecticae et philosophiae* will concentrate on its contribution to the arts of language, that is to subject-matters traditionally associated with grammar, rhetoric and dialectic. As part of his discussion of dialectic, Valla criticizes the metaphysical basis of Aristotelian dialectic, and replaces it with new foundations of his own. But his rebuilding goes further than that. In order to confute Aristotle and his followers, and to establish the superiority of his own system he expresses his opinions on a very wide range of issues: the Trinity, the souls of animals, the virtues, the motion of the stars, the four elements, and the functioning of sense perception. These points have to be considered as part of Valla's system, but I shall not attempt to place Valla's contributions to these other subjects in relation to contemporary views. Students of renaissance ethics rightly give more attention than I shall to Valla's opinion that pleasure, which is equivalent to love, is the supreme good.<sup>33</sup> However Valla's willingness to pronounce on an extremely diverse range of subject-matter is an important characteristic of the book.

A second characteristic which makes the book more difficult to read is its alternation between criticism and creation. Much space is devoted to attacking specific Aristotelian doctrines. These attacks are very often concluded (on occasion, before the attack has really been carried home) with a statement of Valla's own position. These positions of Valla hold together in some respects. After further consideration, however, he often amends them considerably. They are often also philosophically rather naive positions. So the question arises, does Valla criticize Aristotle in order to

<sup>32</sup> Discussions of Valla's dialectic: C. Vasoli, *La dialettica e la retorica dell'Umanesimo* (Milan, 1968), pp. 28-77, C. Trinkaus, *In Our Image and Likeness* (London, 1970), pp. 150-170, D. R. Kelley, *Foundations of Modern Historical Scholarship* (New York, 1970), pp. 28-38, S. I. Camporeale, *Lorenzo Valla: umanesimo*, pp. 33-87, 112-122, 149-253, 405-422, H. B. Gerl, *Rhetorik als Philosophie* (Munich, 1974), L. Jardine, 'Lorenzo Valla and the Intellectual Origins of Humanist Dialectic', *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 15 (1977), pp. 143-164 (revised version in M. Burnyeat ed., *The Sceptical Tradition* (Berkeley, 1983), pp. 253-286), on which see Monfasani, review of *RDP* above, pp. 192-193, E. Garin, 'Lorenzo Valla e l'umanesimo', and S. I. Camporeale, 'Lorenzo Valla <Repastinatio, liber primus> retorica e linguaggio', both in O. Besomi and M. Regoliosi ed., *Lorenzo Valla e l'umanesimo italiano*, a very valuable collection of essays, pp. 1-17, 217-239, N. Streever, 'Lorenzo Valla's Grammar of Subject and Object', *I Tatti Studies*, 2 (1987), pp. 239-267. See also the articles mentioned in chapter 3, n. 44 below.

<sup>33</sup> For example, C. Trinkaus, *In Our Image and Likeness*, pp. 105-150, M. de Panizza Lorch, *A Defense of Life* (Munich, 1985), J. Kraye, 'Moral Philosophy', in C. B. Schmitt et al. ed., *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 303-386 (322, 340-342, 363, 383-5).

make room for his own views or are his own positive positions really to be thought of as merely a completion of his criticism of Aristotle? Since I believe that Valla intends his positive suggestions seriously, I shall discuss both his criticism of the Aristotelians and his system-making. Both aspects must be taken into account in considering Valla's work as a whole, but sometimes I shall separate arguments he has put together, for the sake of clarity of exposition.

### *Structure of Repastinatio*

*Repastinatio dialecticae et philosophiae* is divided into three books. In the first Valla examines the foundations of dialectic. In the second he looks at the proposition, and gives an account of the topics. In the third he considers forms of argumentation.<sup>34</sup> This structure reflects the division of the first three treatises of Aristotle's *Organon* into categories, proposition and syllogism, but Valla adds something to each section.

The preface to book one proclaims the philosopher's right to liberty of thought and rejects attempts to impose Aristotle's views on everyone. Then Valla attacks the transcendental terms (the transcendentals are terms that are interchangeable with 'being') which appear in Aristotle's *Metaphysics* and play an important role in Thomas Aquinas's system.<sup>35</sup> The transcendentals are words like 'essence', 'quiddity', 'being', 'truth' and 'unity'. Valla wants to replace them all with the everyday word 'thing' (*res*). In the central section of the book he reduces Aristotle's ten categories to three: substance, quality and action. While he surveys the contents of these three categories, he expresses views on many other philosophical topics. Book one also includes a discussion of definition, which Valla regards as the key method of dialectic. The categories and their subdivisions exist in order to make definition possible.<sup>36</sup>

In book two Valla explains the classification of propositions according to quantity and quality. Then he analyses in detail the way the various signs of quantity and quality (such as *omnis*, *quidam*, *nonnullus*, *semper*) operate in different contexts. Rather than use a restricted set of signs whose operations are defined, he argues that we have to look at all the available

<sup>34</sup> *RDP*, pp. 7, 363.

<sup>35</sup> *Metaphysics*, IV.1, V.3, H. Pouillon, 'Le premier traité des propriétés transcendentales', *Revue néoscholastique de philosophie*, 42 (1939), pp. 40-77 (on Philip the Chancellor, d. 1236), T. Aquinas, *Quaestiones de veritate*, q.1 art.1.; *De ente et essentia*, ed. M-D. Roland Gosselin (Kain, 1926), pp. 1-8.

<sup>36</sup> *RDP*, pp. 163, 169.

signs and see how they work in ordinary use. This leads him to criticize several Aristotelian formulations, including the square of contraries. He also reduces Aristotle's four types of opposition of single words to one, and his six types of modal proposition to three. Finally he borrows three chapters from book 5 of Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria* which provide: a general account of proof, a discussion of the use of evidence, accounts of enthymeme, epicheireme<sup>37</sup> and argument and a version of the topics with advice on their use.<sup>38</sup> As a whole the second book combines subject-matter from *De interpretatione* with a treatment of the invention of arguments.

Book three begins with an account of the syllogism, in which Valla rejects the third figure and adds various forms of the first two which Aristotle would have rejected. Then he discusses alternative forms of argumentation, such as hypothetical syllogisms, extended syllogisms, sorites, dilemma, induction, enthymeme and example. Valla emphasizes the range of ways in which arguments can be expressed and the need to examine the words employed to see if they will bear the inferences being made. The overall effect is to reduce the importance of syllogistic form. Valla sees the syllogism not as the guarantee of valid argument but as one form among others, like the others a way of expressing the arguments found by the topics.

As a whole then the book simplifies or rejects many Aristotelian doctrines (in logic and in philosophy generally). It draws attention to everyday uses of language, the topics, the importance of the words employed in reasoning, and the existence of a range of forms of argumentation. My analysis will begin by looking at the philosophical position set out in book one (chapter 3), before moving on to the dialectic developed in books two and three (chapter 4). Then I shall place Valla's book within the traditions of the *trivium* (chapter 5). But it will be helpful to conclude this preliminary chapter by setting out some of the facts about Valla's revisions of his text.

### *Revisions*

As we have seen, Valla completed most of his major works during the

---

<sup>37</sup> An enthymeme is an imperfect syllogism, an epicheireme an attempt at proof. Aristotle, *Topica*, 162a16, *Rhetoric*, 1355a6-12, Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, 5.10.1-9; 5.14. Valla defines epicheireme as a syllogism containing plausible (as opposed to necessary) premisses, enthymeme as incomplete argumentation. Hence for Valla there can be enthymemes of inductions and epicheiremes, *RDP*, pp. 352-55.

<sup>38</sup> *Institutio oratoria*, 5.8-10.

years in which he accompanied Alfonso on his campaigns. But he spent a good deal of the rest of his life revising them. It was his custom to send copies of newly completed works to his friends, asking them for comments. On the basis of these comments and, especially, of his own further reading he would add to and alter his already published works. In due course a revised version would be circulated. *Repastinatio dialecticae et philosophiae* exists in three versions, first identified by Gianni Zippel in 1957.<sup>39</sup> The first and third versions remained in manuscript until his publication of them in 1983.<sup>40</sup> Valla began thinking about the work in 1434 and completed the first version in 1439. He had made substantial revisions to the book perhaps by 1441 and certainly by 1444. What we now know as the second version was complete by 1448.<sup>41</sup> This is the stage at which he made the most radical revisions, particularly in the first book. He added some new chapters and reorganised the sequence of the book. Whereas in the first version definition and associated subjects were discussed in the middle of the book, as a preparation for Valla's new account of the categories, in the later versions, definition comes more tidily at the end as the climax of the book. The change in the order of the book may be shown as follows. Chapter numbers in brackets refer to the appendix to this chapter which provides a table of concordance between the chapters of the first and the later versions.

First version	Later versions
1. Preface	1. Preface
2. Introduction:Categories (1)	2. Introduction:Categories (1)
3. Transcendentals (2-5)	3. Transcendentals (2-5)
4. <i>Definition etc.</i> (7,8,10,11)	4. Substance (6-12)
5. Substance (6,9,12-16)	5. Quality (13-15)
6. Quality (17-22)	6. Action (16)
7. Action (22,23)	7. Other Categories (17)
8. Other Categories (24-29)	8. <i>Definition etc.</i> (18-20)

<sup>39</sup> G. Zippel, 'Note sulle redazioni della *Dialectica* di Lorenzo Valla', *Archivio storico per le provincie Parmensi*, 4a serie, IX (1957), pp. 301-14.

<sup>40</sup> Zippel's edition provides a text of the third version, followed by a complete text of the first version. His apparatus to the third version indicates differences between the second and third versions. The second version is available in the facsimile reprint of the 1540 Basel edition of Valla's *Opera omnia* (which forms the first volume of the 1962 Turin *Opera omnia* edited by E. Garin). In book 2 (third recension), Zippel has 2 chapters called chapter 5 - so his numberings need to be corrected.

<sup>41</sup> *RDP*, pp. xi-xiv, xcv-cxi, *Epistolae*, pp. 172, 188, Monfasani's review of *RDP*, pp. 179-189.

The chapter numberings in brackets indicate that certain chapter divisions have been altered, and some minor inconsistencies of ordering removed. The list of chapters appended points out that chapters 6 and 13 of the second version largely consist of new material. Valla made one very important change in terminology: where in the first version he refused to write 'substance' but insisted on 'consubstance', in the later versions he wrote 'substance'. The significance of this will be discussed in the next chapter. In general he is less clear cut in his explanations, suppressing one passage where he explained how his categories work and another in which his condemnation of abstraction was too sweeping even for him.<sup>42</sup> He also adds many new criticisms of details of Aristotle's works, which reflect further reading in the intervening years.<sup>43</sup> He revised some of his innovations in metaphysics to strengthen them against possible criticism.

In books two and three the second version amalgamates some chapters and sometimes omits, or reorganizes the treatment of, particular details. There are also some changes to the examples. Although some of his changes may be interpreted as responses to criticism (it may have been self-criticism), Valla does not withdraw his most sweeping innovations. He alters some of his comments on the Trinity, but he does not take back the logical points mentioned in the accusation before the inquisition, because he did not regard them as issues of religious belief.<sup>44</sup>

Valla was at work on the third version in the 1450s.<sup>45</sup> Although manuscripts of the third version provide a complete text, some scholars consider that Valla still had not completed his revisions at the time of his death in 1457. They argue that if he had finished it he would have circulated it to his friends.<sup>46</sup> The third version mainly adds new examples (particularly from the Bible) and new criticisms of Aristotle, which seem to reflect careful reading of his scientific works. Between the first version and the third, book one almost doubles in size. It is clear from his revisions that Valla continued to read widely in the 1440s and 1450s, improving his knowledge of Greek and broadening his range of authors.<sup>47</sup>

In some ways the alterations to book one make Valla's metaphysical system less clear and less consistent than it was in the first version. On the

<sup>42</sup> *RDP*, pp. 363-66, 373-74.

<sup>43</sup> See the list of criticisms of Aristotle in chapter 3 below.

<sup>44</sup> *RDP*, pp. 50-53, 403-408, Camporeale, *Lorenzo Valla: umanesimo*, pp. 235-76, G. Zippel, 'L'auto-difesa', pp. 88, 90, Valla, *Opera omnia*, I, pp. 799, 799a.

<sup>45</sup> *RDP*, pp. xiv-xv, cviii-cxiii. Camporeale, pp. 212-215.

<sup>46</sup> *RDP*, pp. xiv-xv, cx-cxi. This is also Camporeale's view.

<sup>47</sup> *RDP*, p. 8.

other hand it is important to take note of significant changes. For this reason I shall consider both versions of book one in my discussion of Valla's metaphysics in the next chapter. For the second and third books, since the changes mainly involve adding in new arguments and examples it seems most appropriate to use the third version which represents Valla's own last view of his text. It should be borne in mind, however, that readers of *Repastinatio* in manuscript may have had access to different versions. Although it was the second version which was eventually printed and to which sixteenth-century authors refer, it is likely that it did not circulate in Valla's lifetime. Perotti, who was a close associate of Valla's and was attempting to collect his works, only came across a copy of *Repastinatio* in the late 1450s, and even then it was a manuscript of the first recension.<sup>48</sup> In spite of the bravado of the letter to Tortelli cited above, it may even be that Valla in effect suppressed the book, by continuing his revisions but refraining from circulating it.

### *Appendix to Chapter 2*

#### Table of Concordance between the first and later versions of book one.

##### First Version

Chapter (short title)	Later Versions
Preface	Preface
1. Everything is comprehended in three categories	1(6,13)
2. Only <i>res</i> is a transcendental	2
3. On being, essence, and <i>ens</i>	5,4
4. On concrete and abstract	3
5. On good, true and one	2
6. On form, matter and nature	12
7. Does substance receive more and less?	18
8. Is there a medium between contraries?	19
9. On distribution of substance	7
10. On definition	20
11. On property	20
12. On substance	—(13)
13. God	8
14. The soul of man and beast	9,10
15. On body	7

<sup>48</sup> Monfasani, n. 3 above, pp. 181-84, 188-89.

16. On animal	7
17. On quality perceived mentally	15
18. On the object of sight	14,17
19. On the object of hearing	14
20. On the object of taste and smell	14
21. On touch	14
22. On hardness, strength, coition and sleep	14,16
23. On motion	16
24. On place	17
25. On time	17
26. On measure	17
27. On the other qualities	15
28. Some nouns come under two categories	16
29. On passion	17

#### Later Versions

##### Chapter (short title)

##### Preface

1. How many categories and transcendentals are there?	1
2. The six transcendentals amount to <i>res</i>	2,5
3. There is no 'concrete' sense, with minor exceptions	4
4. No nouns are formed in <i>-itas</i> from substantives	3
5. Essence and being are the same	3
6. Distinguishing essence from substance	—(1)
7. Distribution of substance	9
8. On spirit, God and angels	13
9. On soul	14
10. On the virtues	14
11. On body	15
12. On matter and form	6
13. 9 accidental categories are reduced to quality and action	—(1,12)
14. Qualities of the senses	18-22
15. Qualities of the common sense	17,27
16. On action, motion and 'to be'	22,23,28
17. Other categories are reduced to substance, quality and action	17,18,24
18. Does substance receive more and less?	25,26,29
19. What kind of extremes have a mean between them?	7
20. On definition and property	8
	10,11

##### First Version Preface

## CHAPTER THREE

### CATEGORIES AND METAPHYSICS

In the first book of *Repastinatio dialecticae et philosophiae*, Valla attacks the metaphysical basis of Aristotelian dialectic.<sup>1</sup> In place of Aristotle's *Categories* and doctrines of his followers (such as the transcendentals) Valla proposes his own simplified version of metaphysics.

In his *Categories* Aristotle aimed to classify things in the world according to their different ways of existing. For him, Plato, Plato's skin colour, the colour pink, and tall all exist in different ways. In classifying these things, Aristotle was also classifying the terms which would become the subjects and predicates of logical propositions. These propositions would be the subject of *De interpretatione*, and the arguments which result from the combination of propositions would be analysed in *Prior Analytics*. So *Categories* discusses some of the components of dialectic. In our terms, however, *Categories* belongs more to metaphysics than to dialectic because it classifies the types of being.<sup>2</sup> Aristotle distinguishes ten classes of being, providing the following examples:

Of substance: man, horse; of quantity: four-foot, fivefoot; of quality: white, grammatical; of a relative: double, half, larger; of where: in the Lyceum, in the market-place; of when: yesterday, last year; of being in a position: is lying, is sitting; of having: has shoes on, has armour on; of doing: cutting, burning; of being affected: being cut, being burned.<sup>3</sup>

For the Middle Ages, Aristotle's *Categories* was prefaced by Porphyry's (232-c.304) *Isagoge*, or introduction, which defines the predicables ('five common words'). *Categories* uses these words but does not explain them. The predicables (genus, species, property, *differentia* and accident) classify

---

<sup>1</sup> Valla does not always distinguish criticism of Aristotle from criticism of Latin Aristotelians. When I write Aristotelian I usually mean the tradition whereas 'Aristotle's' (as in the list of disagreements below) refers to his own writings or to views attributed to him.

<sup>2</sup> G. E. L. Owen, 'Logic and Metaphysics in some Earlier Works of Aristotle', in I. Düring and Owen eds, *Aristotle and Plato in the Mid-Fourth Century* (Gothenburg, 1960), pp. 163-190, repr. in Owen, *Logic, Science and Dialectic* (London, 1986), pp. 180-199, T. Irwin, *Aristotle's First Principles* (Oxford, 1988).

<sup>3</sup> *Categories*, 1b27-2a4. For *Categories* and *De interpretatione*, I have used the translation and commentary by J. L. Ackrill (Oxford, 1963).

kinds of relation which may hold between subject and predicate.<sup>4</sup>

*Isagoge* and *Categories* are Valla's main targets in book one of *Repastinatio*. Wherever possible he reduces Aristotelian distinctions and the terminology which goes with them. But he aims to cover the same ground as Aristotle: to explain how the world is organised and how it is represented in language. In order to refute Aristotle over as wide a field as possible, and in order to show that his own system has the same explanatory power as Aristotle's, Valla makes reference to many issues beyond logic and metaphysics: the nature of God, the structure of the mind, and the nature of the elements for example.

The analysis which follows is organised into three sections in order to reflect the different aspects of Valla's work. First I discuss Valla's new system, then I describe his attacks on Aristotelian logic, and finally I consider Valla's remarks on other philosophical and scientific subjects. At the conclusion of the second of these sections are added: a discussion of Valla as a philosophical critic of Aristotle and a list of the Aristotelian doctrines he rejects.

#### *Valla's system*

Valla aims to simplify the Aristotelian foundations of dialectic in order to show that dialectic is a short and simple art which does not take long to learn. In particular he wishes to show that many Aristotelian distinctions are unnecessary and that much of their terminology is unacceptable. On occasion he ridicules Aristotelian philosophical argument by restoring the words used to a context in ordinary usage (19, 226, 395-396). Wherever possible he asserts that the words in ordinary use are adequate to express the structure of the world and people's experience of it. When Valla refers to ordinary usage he means, as Mirko Tavoni has shown, the language of the best authors, and especially of Quintilian, rather than that of ordinary people in the fifteenth century.<sup>5</sup> Valla is prepared to take sides against common usage when that fits in with his argument (386, 331). But he rejects attempts to create hierarchies of concepts outside reality, in terms of which reality will be understood. For him such inferred concepts and the

<sup>4</sup> I have used the Latin translation: *Categoriarum Supplementa: Porphyrii Isagoge et Liber sex principiorum*, ed. L. Minio-Paluello, *Aristoteles Latinus*, I, 6-7 (Bruges, 1966). There is an English translation by E. W. Warren (Toronto, 1975), Medieval Sources in Translation 16.

<sup>5</sup> M. Tavoni, 'Lorenzo Valla e il volgare', in O. Besomi and M. Regoliosi eds., *Lorenzo Valla e l'umanesimo Italiano* (Padua, 1986), pp. 199-216, *Latino, grammatica, volgare* (Padua, 1984), pp. 145-146.

outlandish words coined to express them are an affront to the competence of natural language. Valla sees Aristotelian metaphysics both as a mystification, in that it involves conceptions outside ordinary experience which defy explanation, and as a systematic impoverishment of language, in that it enforces the use of a simplified and internally coordinated vocabulary. In tandem with his attacks on Aristotelian doctrines, Valla asserts that his system, which is based on a few current Latin words, can account for the same range of phenomena as Aristotle's.

Valla's system has three main elements. Everything which can be talked about is a thing (*res*); all things are comprehended by three categories (substance, quality and action) and the nature of each particular thing can be expressed (and hence known) in its definition. In each case Valla aims to avoid technical language and to assert the adequacy of ordinary words for describing and discussing the world.

### *Res*

'We include all the categories, in which I have said everything is contained, in one word which is 'thing' (*res*)'.<sup>6</sup> Everything which exists is classified under one of the categories, but all the categories are aspects of *res*. The word *res* can be used to refer to anything in the world. Because it includes all the categories it can be said, in scholastic terms, to transcend the categories. The scholastics identified six such transcendentals (*ens*, *essentia*, *quiditas*, *unum*, *bonum*, *verum*).<sup>7</sup> In his attack on this doctrine (discussed below) Valla shows that *res*, an everyday word, is more widely applicable as a referring term than the transcendentals are. He prefers *res* to words like being, essence and unity, because, while the latter words proclaim that they are special and difficult, and invite abstract speculation, *res* has many everyday uses which keep it ordinary and knowable.<sup>8</sup>

Philosophically the effect of using *res* is to proclaim that everything is a thing, to suggest that objects should be treated in a common-sense way and that everything exists in essentially the same way. The implications of this position, if Valla understood them fully, are rather far-reaching. If everything which can be named is a thing, then there is a thing which

<sup>6</sup> *RDP*, p. 366: 'Haec autem omnia, quibus res cunctas contineri dixi, uno vocabulo complectimur, quod est 'res'.'

<sup>7</sup> See note 60 below.

<sup>8</sup> *RDP*, pp. 366-70, 12-18. Valla discusses a range of meanings and uses for *res*. There are several modern studies of its meaning at different periods in M. Fattori and M. Bianchi eds., *Res* (Rome, 1982), the proceedings of a conference held at the Lessico Intellettuale Europeo.

corresponds to every name. Valla later makes it clear that there are non-corporeal things, including abstract concepts (e.g. genus, species) as well as angels (49, 123). Later still he introduces the idea that in particular instances meanings of words might belong to different orders of reality from the things the words usually refer to (124). This development is not wholly consistent with his original position. At the beginning he wants to avoid speculation about the nature of being (which in Aristotle's metaphysics applies to primary substances differently from other categories) by stating that everything that can be named is a thing. Once a word's meaning can belong to a different order of reality from the thing the word names, it is no longer sufficient to say that everything nameable is a thing, without further qualification. One way in which modern philosophers deal with this problem is by asserting that a word has sense as well as reference. Medieval philosophers dealt with it by erecting a complicated structure of mental concepts between the words and the things the words name, and they made it clear that logic dealt with mental concepts rather than with words or things. It was these intermediary structures which Valla rejected by his abrupt beginning and by his attacks on the barbarity of recent logicians. The difficulties with his position were: first, that his own categorical division did not achieve all he required in the way of naturalness of expression and easy resolution of difficulties, and second, that some of the statements he wanted to make required him to make distinctions between concepts and things.

Because *res* is a universal referring word Valla is not able to define it through genus and *differentia*. In his view the word is so often and so widely used that it does not require definition (392). All the same he makes two remarks about its transcendental uses.

We include all the categories, in which I have said everything is contained, in one word which is *res*.

*Res* embraces all things in its signification.<sup>9</sup>

At this stage it appears that these two formulations are to be taken as equivalents. All things are part of the master category *res*, and *res* can signify everything. By making *res* the master category, and therefore the genus to which the other categories belong, Valla makes it possible to

---

<sup>9</sup> *RDP*, p. 366 (note 6 above), p. 392: 'res omnia significatione complectitur'; p. 15: 'Quae res' autem ad omnia spectat praedicamenta, quoniam singula illorum sunt res.' On p. 166 Valla says merely that Aristotle was not aware that the categories could be defined using *res*. The later versions are much weaker, but I do not think they change the view of *res*.

define the other categories (392, 166).<sup>10</sup> Aristotle had been unable to do this because he thought that the differences between the kinds of being classified by the categories (and especially the distinction between primary substance and everything else) were too great for them all to be included in a single genus.

### *Definition*

For Valla definition is the means by which the meaning of a word (and the nature of a thing) can be expressed accurately and concisely. He treats definition as the most important way of understanding individual words (and things). This makes it the climax of the first book.

I have called definition the royal judge or official of the treasury because it considers nothing other than that royal word ‘what?’, that is, ‘which thing?’.<sup>11</sup>

Definition is the full answer to the question ‘what is it?’, once it has been established that something exists (169). Valla follows Quintilian’s definition.

The definition is a statement of the thing proposed, expressed appropriately, clearly and briefly. It consists principally of genus, species, *differentia* and properties.<sup>12</sup>

Valla uses Quintilian’s words to explain each of the predicables, which he treats as components of a definition. He also cites Quintilian’s remarks on the use of etymology in definitions. In the first version, Valla made a distinction between the interpretation of a word (‘philosophy is the desire for wisdom’) and its definition (‘philosophy is true knowledge of things human and divine’).<sup>13</sup> Later he omitted this, perhaps because the example cited conflicted with his opinion about philosophy (1-2, 359). This distinction was also potentially damaging to his larger system, since it makes analysing the word differ from analysing the thing the word names.

<sup>10</sup> Though in fact he only defines *substantia*, and only in the first version, *RDP*, p. 392: ‘substantia est res quae ceteris rebus subsistit, et quae non appareat, vel substantia est res quae subest qualitatibus et actioni, sola trium non apparens, quibus tribus rebus omnia comprehenduntur.’

<sup>11</sup> *RDP*, p. 163: ‘Idcirco autem diffinitionem appellari regium censorem quaestoremque aerarium, quod nihil aliud considerat quam illud regium verbum ‘quid’, idest ‘quae res’.’

<sup>12</sup> *Institutio oratoria*, 7.3.2-3, *RDP*, pp. 168, 400: ‘Finitio rei propositae propria et dilucida, et breviter comprehensa verbis enuntiatio. Constat maxime genere, specie, differentibus, propriis.’

<sup>13</sup> *RDP*, p. 392: ‘ut ‘philosophia est studium sapientiae’, interpretatio est; at, ‘philosophia est divinarum humanarumque rerum cognitio’, diffinitio.’ Compare pp. 1, 359. The definition of philosophy is adapted from Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations*, 5.3.7.

Throughout the work Valla uses definition to state his most important positions. He favours this technique because it reflects the ordinary practice of explaining the meaning of a word by means of other words. One person can ask another what a word means (or what a thing is) and can be given a verbal answer. Composing definitions is a skill, a product of reading and practice. He cites Quintilian on definition in order to emphasize that making definitions is an act of composition, rather than a manipulation of some taxonomy.

### *Categories*

Valla gives a concentrated explanation (rather than a definition) of his three categories at the beginning of book one, in the first version:

Everything is comprehended by three elements or, as we now say, three categories: substance, quality and action.

Substance is so called from standing under: it either stands by itself with no supports holding it up or it supports and maintains accidents or qualities, not as if it underlies them, but because it contains them. No example can be given because, unlike quality and action, it lacks an outward appearance...

Quality is what is present to substance and action, sometimes also to another quality: such as 'wisdom, or beauty' of a man, 'speed' of walking, 'brightness' of colour, 'variety' of painting, 'extent' of weariness....

Action is a thing which comes to be either out of substance or out of quality such as to wait: waiting, to walk: walking, to heat: heating; and although some words do not seem to signify action but rather quality or rest or something else, nonetheless they undoubtedly signify it, for example 'to love', 'to lament', 'to hate', 'to sit', 'to lie', 'to stand'.<sup>14</sup>

Valla is trying to make a clear distinction between substance and quality. Quality is what you can physically perceive or rationally know about a given thing. Substance is what somehow underlies all those qualities which provide physical or rational knowledge of a thing. At this stage quality is the key category. It seems to stand for whatever is directly knowable about

---

<sup>14</sup> *RDP*, pp. 363-365: 'Tria sunt quibus res omnes comprehenduntur elementa et, ut nunc loquimur, praedicamenta: substantia, qualitas, actio.

Substantia a sub stando est appellata, quae vel per se stat nullis adminiculis fulcta, vel quae accidenti seu qualitati substat atque subsistit, non quasi illi subiaceat, sed quia illam contineat. Exemplum nullum dari potest, quia non appareat ut qualitas et actio...

Qualitas est quod adest substantiae et actioni, nonnunquam et alteri qualitati: ut sapientia, pulchritudo hominis, velocitas ambulationis, fulgor coloris, varietas picturae, magnitudo lassitudinis...

Actio est res quae fit vel ex substantia vel ex qualitate: ut attendere: attentio, ambulare: ambulatio, calfacere: calfactio; et licet quaedam verba non videantur significare actionem, sed qualitatem vel quietem vel aliud quid, tamen eam utique significant, ut amare, dolere, odisse, sedere, iacere, stare.'

an object. Later we learn that quality includes the objects of sense perceptions, any indications we might have about these qualities (e.g. their intensity, weakness, variability), and any conclusions we might draw about the object from them (e.g. its strength or speed) (424-436). Action is taken in a commonsense way to involve activity whether mental or physical. Actions are not to be identified simply with verbs, as Valla's examples of verbs signifying quality and nouns signifying action indicate, but the semantic difference between verb and noun informs his idea of the category of action. His examples convey this idea better than his words ('coming to be out of' as opposed to 'being present to').

In this version substance is rather shadowy, a nameless and formless source of identity for each thing. Each thing is outwardly constituted by the qualities which the substance supports. Valla specifically rejects Aristotle's example of substance (the individual man) on the grounds that it is a thing comprised of substance, quality and action.<sup>15</sup> He prefers to call the individual man a consubstance, using a term taken from discussions of the Trinity (401-402).

Valla takes up the problem of being unable to specify substance in his discussion of quality.

That example which we just gave of quality being present to substance is incorrect, because man, to whom wisdom or beauty is present is not substance alone: but we cannot speak in any other way. Also, in what I have said to be present, there is no difference between it being always present and it being able to be absent sometimes, as in the case of fire, light and heat which are qualities that can never be absent from the substance of fire. But it does not follow, as many think, that because these things cannot be absent from the substance, all of them together should be called by the name of substance. Heat, brightness and flickering which are three qualities of fire are different from each other. If they differ among themselves, how much more do they differ from the subject in which they inhere, which if it is anything at all (as it certainly is), what can it be but substance? Therefore this substance will be a single thing, not a group.<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> *RDP*, p. 364: 'Nam si dicam 'homo', non est haec substantia, sed res constans ex substantia, qualitate et actione.' *Categories*, 1b28.

<sup>16</sup> *RDP*, p. 365: 'Illud autem exemplum quod posuimus, cum adest qualitas substantiae improprium est, quoniam homo cui adest sapientia et pulchritudo, substantia sola non est: sed aliter loqui non possumus. Illud quoque nihil interest quod adesse dixi an perpetuum sit, an aliquando abesse queat, ut in igne qualitas est lux, qualitas calor quae a substantia ignis abesse non possunt. Sed non ideo quia abesse a substantia nequeunt, erunt haec omnia coniuncta substantiae nomine appellanda, ut plerisque placet; aliud enim est calor, aliud splendor, aliud vibratus quae sunt tres ignis qualitates: quae, si inter se differunt, quanto magis different a subiecto cui inhaerent, quod siquod est (ut certe est), quid nisi substantia erit? Ergo una res, non universa, haec sit substantia.'

In this extract Valla attempts to distinguish substance from quality. Substance is what is not quality, what underlies a collection of qualities and gives them unity and existence. (It is of course problematic for Valla's system that his way of talking about substance seems to invoke two of the very transcendentals which he was so anxious to exclude from metaphysics.) He refuses to say that some qualities are essential, and therefore part of substance, while some are variable. In taking up this position, Valla is confronting a genuine difficulty in Aristotle's *Categories*. In Valla's terms Aristotle confuses substance with quality when he names a man, a thing which consists of substance and qualities together, as an example of substance alone. This same problem is expressed by modern commentators in the question 'how can an accident be a *differentia* of a substance?' - how can two-footedness be a *differentia* of man?<sup>17</sup>

Valla's solution to the problem of distinguishing between substance and quality also anticipates and avoids the logical weaknesses which follow from specifying 'essential qualities'. In a disputation an opponent can cause considerable damage to any definition which involves essential qualities, by attempting to vary these qualities in such a way as to suggest arbitrariness in the definition. (One might think of the difficulties involved in defining a table: does it have to have legs? must it have a flat surface on top? if it need only be capable of supporting something, how can it be distinguished from numerous other objects?)

In order to avoid such difficulties, Valla is prepared to accept the awkwardness of not being able to name any individual substances. But for someone who is committed to using words in ordinary ways and to avoiding concepts which attempt to go behind language this seems to be a very heavy price to pay. His treatment of the three categories also fails to achieve his stated aim of a definition in each case.<sup>18</sup> All that he is able to say about them is vague and depends for its effectiveness on a much more sympathetic reading than he gives Aristotle.

These problems (and others which follow) show the difficulty of the project of trying to replace metaphysics with something simpler and more like ordinary language. Ordinary language, it would appear, is shot through with metaphysical assumptions, some of them contradictory. That is why systematic discussion of metaphysical problems is both worthwhile and difficult. Valla did not draw this conclusion. Indeed one wants to criticize

---

<sup>17</sup> J. L. Ackrill trans., *Aristotle's Categories*, pp. 82, 85-87.

<sup>18</sup> Though he manages a definition of substance at *RDP*, p. 392.

him from almost contradictory viewpoints. On the one hand it can appear that he is trying to reconstruct philosophy from scratch, confronting in turn each of the obstacles of the history of philosophy, arrogantly ignoring the possibility that he might learn anything from previous mistakes and their solutions. On the other hand, however much he wants to repudiate Aristotle, he has taken over so many Aristotelian notions and he has cast his own system in such a similar structure, that he will be unable to avoid Aristotelianism without inconsistency. He is too disrespectful to Aristotle to succeed as an Aristotelian, and too dependent on him to succeed in presenting a wholly different solution.<sup>19</sup>

In practice the unnameability of substance forced Valla to write chapters on consubstance (rather than substance) alongside his chapters on quality and action. In effect consubstance became the category.

### *Categories revisited*

In the later versions of his work, Valla does not provide such a connected exposition of his three categories. Instead such discussion as there is occurs in the separate sections on each. He introduces his consideration of substance with two chapters on the latin translations for the Greek words ὕπόστασις and οὐσία. After a review of the usage and opinions of various authors (which I consider in chapter five below) he decides to follow Boethius and translate οὐσία, the first of the categories, as *substantia*. Since *essentia* is available for work, he employs it as the focus of unity behind the qualities which, according to Valla, constitute the knowable aspects of the substance. The new idea might be compared with the old, as follows:

	New		Old	
	Essence		Substance	
Substance	<	Consubstance	<	
	Quality		Quality <sup>20</sup>	

In both cases, Valla made this distinction parallel with the Aristotelian distinction between matter and form, of which he basically disapproved.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup> C. B. Schmitt discusses the unavoidability of using Aristotelian notions, even for critics of Aristotle. He refers to this as the inability to 'escape from the Aristotelian predicament'; *A Critical Survey and Bibliography of Studies on Renaissance Aristotelianism* (Padua, 1971), p. 130. I owe this reference to Jill Kraye.

<sup>20</sup> *RDP*, pp. 46, 382, 401-402. Here Valla is giving *essentia* a new sense, but he prefers not to use the word at all.

<sup>21</sup> Valla's criticism of the doctrine of form and matter is discussed in more detail below.

This alteration left the chapters on the first category almost unchanged, since he could now write substance where before he had written consubstance, but it reinstated a third transcendental (essence, in addition to unity and existence) and reopened the problem of essential and variable qualities.

In the later versions, Valla begins his discussion of quality and action with a new chapter which announces the reduction of Aristotle's nine categories of accident to two. He objects to the word 'accident'.

They say that an accident is what can be present or absent without causing the destruction of the subject. What? Heat can be absent from fire without it ceasing to be fire? They say 'heat in fire is an *ousial* form'. What? Is not form itself of such a kind that it is *ousia*? They say 'it is *ousial* with respect to the composed unity, as form is called substantial which differs from accidental form, such as heat in an iron bar'. I have distinguished 'substance' from '*ousia*' so that the thing might be more easily understood. I prefer now to work with familiar words rather than disputed words and to use quality rather than form, so that one will be natural quality, the other non-natural.

Natural quality is quality which cannot be absent from the essence, such as flickering, light and heat in the sun, lightness in air, heaviness in earth and water, the potential of perceiving, understanding and willing in the mind, eternity, wisdom and goodness in God, in whose image and likeness we were created...

Non-natural quality is like heat in an iron bar. But it is more true to say that colour and shape and touch and weight are natural qualities. It is false to say, as some do, that these can be absent, as though in the apple of which I have just been speaking, greenness and roundness and sharpness and weight can be taken away. Colour and form and touch and weight can be changed but they cannot be taken away. They cannot be changed into another quality, but into the same one: this colour into that, this shape into that, this touch into that, this weight into that...

For this reason the genus-level qualities should be called perpetual and, in certain cases, as I have said of fire, also the species level qualities. The genus-level qualities are either objects of the physical senses or of the intellectual senses.<sup>22</sup>

---

<sup>22</sup> *RDP*, pp. 112-115: 'Accidens esse aiunt, quod potest adesse et abesse citra subiecti corruptionem. Quid, calor in igne potest citra ignis corruptionem abesse? 'Forma', inquiunt, 'ousialis est calor in igne'. Quid, non huiusmodi forma et ipsa 'ousia' est? 'Usialis est' (aiunt) 'respectu compositi, et dicatur forma substantialis, a qua differt forma accidentalis, ut calor in ferro'. Ego distinxii 'substantiam' ab 'ousia', quo res magis intelligeretur. Ita nunc consuetis quam captiosis verbis agere malo et 'qualitate' uti quam 'forma', ut alia sit 'qualitas naturalis', alia 'non naturalis'.

'Naturalis' est qualitas quae ab essentia nequit abesse: ut in sole vibratus, lux, ardor, in aere levitas, in terra et aqua gravitas, ut in anima potentia capiendi, intelligendi, volendi, ut in Deo eternitas, sapientia, bonitas, ad cuius imaginem et similitudinem conditi sumus... 'Non naturalis', ut ille ipse calor in ferro. Color autem et figura et tactus et pondus,

This discussion opens up the problems involved both in regarding all qualities as optional, and in determining which qualities are to be regarded as essential parts of a substance; but it hardly solves them. The introduction of the idea that *genera* of qualities will always be required draws out some further implications of the problem. While it is true that everything will have some sort of shape and colour, this does not help us decide whether or not a table has legs. It will not be enough to say that fire must have some sort of temperature and some sort of colour. Valla will continue to insist on light and heat. He acknowledges that particular substances will need to be distinguished by necessarily having certain specific qualities as well as the obligatory general qualities. So the chief difficulty of specifying and then defending the essential qualities of a particular thing has not been solved.

With substance and quality the idea given by the general discussions is filled out by the examples and divisions discussed later in the section. For example, under the quality of touch in the first version a list of adjectives naming the different sorts of touch (e.g. soft, hard, smooth, sharp, warm, cold, damp, dry, thick etc.) is provided (435). This listing of words is programmatic. Where another writer would attempt to explain how touch works, and how we distinguish different sorts of touch, Valla remains at the level of the words usually employed, and avoids going behind them to some more technical description of reality. Touch he implies is what is signified by the vocabulary of touch. Or, to put it the other way round, there is something in the world which corresponds to each of these words.

In the later versions, the third category is discussed in chapter 16, 'On Action, Motion, and the Substantive Verb'. Valla does not think that action should be termed an accident since it does not happen contingently but emanates from spirit, body, animal (his three divisions of substance) and quality. He discusses different translations of Aristotle's ἐνάργεια: *actus*, *actio*, *opera*, *operatio*. He attacks Aristotle's conception of δύναμις, potential. He discusses the tendency of verbs to signify quality as well as action, and gives examples of nouns and verbs which are action in one respect and quality in another. He reduces Aristotle's six kinds of motion to

---

verius est ut naturales qualitates dicantur, quas abesse posse (ut quidam aiunt) falsum est quod dicant, veluti in pomo de quo paulo ante dixi, viorem et rotunditatem et asperitatem et pondus auferri. Mutatur enim color et forma et tactus et pondus, non auferuntur; non in aliam qualitatem, sed in seipsam: hic color in illum, haec figura in illam, hic tactus in illum, hoc pondus in illud...

Quare perpetuae qualitates hae dicendae erunt quae generales sunt, in quibusdam (ut dixi de igni) etiam speciales. Sunt autem generales quae aut sensibus obiciuntur, aut sensis.'

one (127-133).<sup>23</sup> In these paragraphs he is bringing together discussions of problem cases from different places in the first version, but he concludes with something more central.

The substantive verb *sum* plays the same role in relation to other verbs that *res* plays in relation to nouns. The meaning of the other verbs depends on *sum*.

For this reason since the substantive verb does not signify anything, one should not ask what it means. Above all it is the genus and origin and as I might say the substance of other verbs, ὑπορκτικόν as it is called in Greek. Unless we say it signifies a certain life, as when we say 'God is', 'I am', 'a stone is'.<sup>24</sup>

This is not equivalent to 'lives', but it signifies the same sort of life that a stone has. The substantive verb is the genus of the other verbs. When it is set apart from them it is said in some way to signify life.<sup>25</sup>

With a question mark however or with something in apposition to it, it seems to signify 'is called'. As 'what is a man?', 'what is an animal?': that is 'what is a man or an animal called?' A man is a rational mortal animal; that is, he is called by these names.<sup>26</sup>

This section offers several suggestions towards a definition of *sum*: the transcendental verb, the genus of verbs, the meaning of being a verb, a certain sort of life, and naming. Valla avoids the word 'exists' but the way he uses the examples of God, man and stone invokes different types of existence in order to explain his idea. The final section looks towards a sort of nominalism in which 'rational' and 'animal' are predicates, rather than categories of things. But this way of speaking (which is only one of a series here) is not really consistent with his earlier talk of qualities being present to substances or of something ceasing to be a given substance if a given quality is absent from it.<sup>27</sup> On the other hand, it would be possible - and

<sup>23</sup> But in addition to change of place, he recognised change of quality (*mutatio*).

<sup>24</sup> *RDP*, pp. 133-134: 'Quare cum nullam rem significet verbum substantivum, non est querendum quid significet, praesertim cum sit genus et origo et ut sic dicam substantia verborum aliorum: ut graece vocatur ὑπορκτικόν. Nisi dicimus significare vitam quandam, ut cum dicimus 'Deus est', 'ego sum', 'lapis est'.'

<sup>25</sup> Valla illustrates his point by an alchemical comparison with quicksilver, *RDP*, p. 134: 'Et quemadmodum argentum vivum materia et genus est omnium metallorum et in quod illa resolvuntur, ita verbum substantivum aliorum verborum, et ut hoc separatum a metallis reliquis (si ipsum dicendum est metallum) vivere dicatur, ita verbum substantivum a caeteris seiunctum, quodammodo vitam significare dicendum est.'

<sup>26</sup> *RDP*, p. 134: 'Cum interrogatione autem aut cum apposito videtur significare 'appellatur'. Ut 'quid est homo?', 'quid est animal?': idest 'homo' vel 'animal, quid appellatur?' Homo est animal rationale mortale, idest his nominibus appellatur.'

<sup>27</sup> For example *RDP*, pp. 365, 112.

perhaps better - to interpret the equation of 'is' with 'is called' as a further ratification of the adequacy of things said, as expressions of how things are.

There are many objections that can be made to Valla's positive system, as a substitute for Aristotle's metaphysics. He does not succeed in providing the categories with definitions or solve the problem of distinguishing substance from quality. The classification of substance (spirit, including God and angels, the souls of man and beast; body and animal) which he offers in place of the 'tree of Porphyry' is open to the very objections which he makes to the latter: duplication, omission and inconsistency.<sup>28</sup> The system makes no allowance for identity through change, and it does not resolve the problem of the status of universals. It is equally evident that Valla's categories play a similar role to Aristotle's, and divide up reality in a similar way, in spite of the differences.

#### *Valla's categories and Quintilian*

Valla greatly admired Quintilian. In *Repastinatio dialecticae et philosophiae*, he often quotes his definitions and twice praises him (172-3, 244). He saw him as a predecessor in the project of writing a dialectic suited to the everyday use of reasoning (345). On one occasion he is seriously inconsistent with himself in order to agree with him (170-2).

It has been suggested that Quintilian is the source for Valla's system of categories.<sup>29</sup> Quintilian had begun his discussion of status theory with a review of alternative theories.<sup>30</sup> One of the theories discussed was Aristotle's *Categories*. Quintilian said that the first four categories (essence, quality, quantity, relation) are concerned with status theory while the last six are topics. This rather surprising notion seems to rest, in part, on a misunderstanding. Quintilian thought that Aristotle's category of relation was equivalent to the type of rhetorical status known as transfer of

---

<sup>28</sup> Substance is divided into body and spirit, spirit into created and creating, created spirit into angels and non-angels, angels into heavenly and infernal, non-angels into mortal and immortal. Body is divided into vegetable and non-vegetable. There is also a third group, animals, which possess spirit and body. Animals are divided into human and non-human. *RDP*, pp. 402-403, 419-423, 48-50. The souls of men and animals are mortal non-angels, while their bodies and souls together are animals. Their bodies are not separately included in the classification. For the tree of Porphyry, and Valla's attacks on it see below.

<sup>29</sup> S. I. Camporeale, *Lorenzo Valla, umanesimo e teologia* (Florence, 1972), p. 164. He states his more general thesis, that from the viewpoint of a follower of Quintilian, Valla reduced philosophy to rhetoric on pp. 161-162.

<sup>30</sup> *Institutio oratoria*, 3.6.1-62.

the charge and comparison.<sup>31</sup> When Quintilian came to discuss in turn his three kinds of status: conjecture (does this exist?, did this happen?), definition (what is this?), and quality (what is this like? how is this?), he made some comments about the kinds of questions which occur in each status, and he explained that quantity is an aspect of quality.<sup>32</sup> Since these comments were very helpful to Valla in reducing the ten categories to three, and particularly in reducing quantity to a part of quality, he quoted them (9-10). He also quoted Quintilian's examples of questions belonging to each type of status.<sup>33</sup>

In the tradition of the *trivium*, the categories, which classify the kinds of predicates, or the kinds of things which exist, are different from the types of status, which classify the questions on which controversy can arise. Quintilian, who was not interested in metaphysics, confused them, either because he was following Cicero or as a result of error (the Aristotelian revival was only just beginning in his lifetime).<sup>34</sup> Valla generally keeps the two well apart. He speaks of the categories as the most general classes of things. His three categories (substance, quality and action) are different from, though close to, his three kinds of status (conjecture, definition and quality) (244). I do not think that we should regard Quintilian's account of status as the 'rhetorical' origin of Valla's three categories, which are after all a reconstruction of metaphysics.<sup>35</sup> If a source is required (and one should remember that the *Categories* only discussed four categories fully), then the grammatical distinction between noun, adjective, and verb, or Priscian's remark about the noun consisting of substance and quality may be the most promising.<sup>36</sup> However, when Valla needs to support his argument that quantity is not a separate category, he is quite happy to use a helpful quotation from Quintilian (136). Given Valla's general eclecticism and opportunism, it should not be assumed that the use of this quotation implies that his metaphysical system comes from Quintilian.

It has been argued that Valla's categories and his status theory are both

<sup>31</sup> *Institutio oratoria*, 3.6.23.

<sup>32</sup> *Institutio oratoria*, 3.6.80-90, (90). Here Quintilian is following Cicero, *Orator*, 14.45, as he points out at 3.6.44.

<sup>33</sup> RDP, p. 243, *Institutio oratoria*, 7.2.2, 7.3.5-6, 7.4.1.

<sup>34</sup> It is difficult to apportion responsibility. Cicero's comments are very brief but he certainly suggests the generalisation of the doctrine of status, Quintilian goes much further in linking status with Aristotle's categories.

<sup>35</sup> *Institutio oratoria*, 3.6.23-24 is only quoted early in the book in the later versions, but 3.6.31ff. is cited in the attempt to reduce quantity to quality in the first version (p. 428).

<sup>36</sup> RDP, p. 42, Priscian, *Grammatica*, 18.7.69.

dominated by the concept of quality.<sup>37</sup> In status theory, particularly as it is presented by Cicero and Quintilian, strategies of arguing based on conjecture ('what you say happened did not happen') and definition ('I killed him but it was not murder') are as important as those based on quality ('It was murder but it was justified'). Although Quintilian blurs them, there are two rather different concepts of quality involved. In status theory quality only comes into play when the facts of a particular case and the definition of the facts are agreed by both sides. Quality in status theory is concerned with how you view the thing (usually a particular action) whose definition you are agreed on.<sup>38</sup> In Valla's metaphysical scheme, by contrast, both existence and definition can only be inferred from the data provided by quality.

### *The adequacy of language*

Valla's criticisms of Aristotle consistently reject unusual uses of words and mysterious ways of thinking. He prefers to speak of things rather than of essences or beings. Rather than think of a line as something imaginary, with no width and hence no area, he speaks of it as a mark on a piece of paper with a definite if small area (142-147). Rather than try to explain how sense impressions are received and classified, he says that the sense qualities are the adjectives which are used about them. Expression corresponds to reality. There is the same directness in the initial definitions. Where Aristotle's *Categories* starts by comparing ways of speaking, Valla says without qualification 'There are three elements by which all things are comprehended'.<sup>39</sup>

Some light is thrown on this position by Valla's understanding of truth. As part of his discussion of the transcendentals, towards the beginning of book one, Valla argues that truth is not something which is said of everything which exists. Rather it is a quality of mind and of discourse.<sup>40</sup> As a quality of mind it has to do with knowledge of some thing, as a quality of discourse it denotes saying what one really thinks.

---

<sup>37</sup> Camporeale, *Lorenzo Valla: umanesimo*, pp. 162-166.

<sup>38</sup> Agricola takes some care to keep these two uses of *qualitas* apart, *De inventione dialectica* (Cologne, 1539), p. 229.

<sup>39</sup> RDP, p. 363: 'Tria sunt quibus res omnes comprehenduntur elementa.' Compare *Categories*, 1a16-2a15, where all the main distinctions are introduced by speaking of what is said.

<sup>40</sup> RDP, p. 378: 'veritas qualitas est quae sensui mentis inest, et orationi;' p. 19: 'verum sive veritas est proprie scientia sive notitia cuiuscunq; rei, et quasi lux animi, quae ad sensus quoque se porrigit.'

In the first version Valla argues that the word 'true' as in 'is it true that there is more than one world?' is used when one point of view has been contested by another in argument (including cases in which this dispute is internal) rather than when a question is posed in the abstract ('is there one world or are there many?').<sup>41</sup> In the later versions he instead emphasizes the idea of truth as a gift of God, as though God gives some people the ability to perceive and understand correctly, while in others something worldly interferes with this divine gift (19-20). In both versions Valla states that there are two kinds of falsehood, one the result of ignorance, the other the result of deceit (378, 20). This implies that while language expresses reality, either misunderstanding or malice may lead words not to correspond with things. The main purpose of this section is to restrict the applicability of the term 'truth', and so disqualify it as a transcendental. It offers, however, incidental confirmation of Valla's belief that (in the absence of ignorance or malice) language reflects reality.<sup>42</sup> Nor is there anything relativistic in Valla's conception of truth. Elsewhere in the work Valla continues to define philosophy as the pursuit of truth, and to speak of himself as fighting for truth against ignorance.<sup>43</sup>

Valla makes more explicit the idea of the adequacy of language to its descriptive task in a discussion of language which appears in the later versions.<sup>44</sup>

The sound of the human voice is natural but its meaning comes from custom: this meaning is also a quality. But although the sound of words originates from nature, yet it too descends through custom or training. For men, once they knew things, found sounds which they modified and

<sup>41</sup> *RDP*, p. 378: 'Nam cum quaerimus 'an unus mundus sit, an plures', non ita quaerimus 'an verum sit unum mundum esse', sed ex contradictione aut alterius, ut: 'verene ille sentit plures mundos esse?' aut nostra, cum ipsi apud nos duas pluresve partes, sicut in deliberando, suspicimus.'

<sup>42</sup> If I understand him rightly, S. I. Camporeale argues from this passage that for Valla truth is not so much the correspondence between thought and reality as the discourse which expresses the individual's view of truth. He goes on to argue that truth and falsehood are purely a property of speech. I think this view is excluded by Valla's reference to two kinds of falsity. S. I. Camporeale, 'Lorenzo Valla *Repastinatio liber primus: retorica e linguaggio*', in O. Besomi and M. Regolosi eds, *Lorenzo Valla e l'umanesimo italiano* (Padua, 1986), pp. 217-39 (223-24).

<sup>43</sup> *RDP*, pp. 2, 7, 277-278, 356.

<sup>44</sup> I enter into the interpretation of this passage with some trepidation in view of the controversy it has recently aroused. See, in addition to the article of Camporeale mentioned in note 42 above, R. Waswo, *Language and Meaning in the Renaissance* (Princeton, 1987), J. Monfasani, 'Was Lorenzo Valla an ordinary language philosopher?', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 50 (1989), pp. 309-323, and the replies by R. Waswo and S. Stever Gravelle in the same number, pp. 324-336. My sympathy in this controversy is with Monfasani, though I think that he understates the unusualness of Valla's views.

afterwards called signs. (Adam was the first of them, God the creator.) They taught the sounds with their meanings to their descendants so that although the sounds (*soni*) came from nature, the significant sounds (*voces*) or the signs, and the meanings, came from art...From which it results that the noises are perceived by the ears, the meanings by the mind, and the significant sounds (*voces*) by both.

Finally the letters were invented, signs of those other signs, silent sounds as it were, or pictures of sounds (since the sounds themselves are almost pictures of meanings), which are now appropriately called 'words'. And whatever we say is a word: even 'substance' itself, 'quality', 'action', and what is more 'res' itself. For just as wood has the name 'wood', and stone 'stone', and iron 'iron', the same goes for incorporeal things, just as knowledge has the name 'knowledge', virtue 'virtue', genus 'genus', species 'species', so substance has the name 'substance', quality in the same way 'quality', action 'action' and lastly *res* 'res'.

So '*res*' means *res*: the latter is signified, the former is the sign or mark of the latter; the meaning *res* is not a word, the sign '*res*' is a word and is defined in this way: "*res*' is a sound or a word which embraces in its signification the significations of all words'.

'Therefore', you say, 'word is more general than *res* because *res* is a word'. But the meaning of '*res*' is more general than the meaning of 'word', that is of 'sign': and so a word or a sign is a thing, and merely one thing. That word (*res*) signifies everything...

For this reason it does not matter whether we say 'what is wood?', 'what is stone?', 'what is iron?', 'what is man?', or 'what does 'wood', 'iron', 'stone', or 'man' mean?'. The same cannot be said of 'what is *res*'? and 'what does '*res*' mean?', because 'what' is resolved into 'which thing'. So it would be foolish to say 'what' about *res*. But if I were to ask 'which word is '*res*'?', you would reply correctly 'it is a word signifying the meaning or sense of all other words', but 'which' (*quae*) in this case means almost the same as 'what kind of' (*qualis*).

Lastly the meaning of the word is what comes under the categories, because 'category' is the same as what the word signifies universally. The signified thing does not come under the category, for instance the meaning of the word 'man' is under the category, but the man himself is under the roof, or under heaven, not under the category, nor when you say 'man is an animal' do you mean anything other than 'animal' is understood in this name 'man' or the meaning of animal is understood.<sup>45</sup>

---

<sup>45</sup> *RDP*, pp. 122-124: 'Vox humana naturalis illa quidem est, sed eius significatio ab institutione: quae significatio et ipsa est qualitas. Verum et vox haec licet a natura oriatur, tamen ab institutione descendit. Homines enim, rebus cognitis, voces quas adaptarent invenerunt et propterea "signa" appellaverunt, quorum primus fuit Adam, Deo auctore; easque cum suis significationibus posteros docuerunt, ut soni quidem sint a natura, voces autem sive signa et significaciones ab artifice...Ex quo fit ut sonos auris, significaciones animus, voces ambo percipient.

Postremo inventae sunt litterae, illorum signorum signa, quasi mutae voces sive vocum imagines (ut ipse voces sunt quasi imagines significationum), quae iam proprie dicuntur 'vocabula'. Atque hoc est quicquid loquimur: etiam ipsum 'substantia', 'qualitas', 'actio', atque adeo ipsum 'res'. Nam sicuti ligno nomen est 'lignum', et lapidi 'lapis', et ferro

This is a very dense and rather elliptically expressed passage which requires a detailed commentary. The greatest difficulty is posed by the final paragraph, which was added in the third version. It seems to me that the view of language which Valla generally expresses in this work (of which the first five paragraphs of this extract are the most concentrated and most explicit discussion) is fairly consistent but flawed.<sup>46</sup> In the final paragraph of this extract he is drawn into an argument which is seriously inconsistent with his general position.

In the first five paragraphs of this section Valla sets out a consistent view of how language functions. Language arises from nature: sounds and things (including incorporeal things). First humans encounter the things. They give names to the things. The names are sounds, at first natural sounds but from the second generation sounds standardised through teaching. The meaning of the name is the thing. Each thing has a name. Each name corresponds to a thing. While this might appear to mean that

---

'ferrum', item rerum incorporalium ut scientiae est nomen 'scientia', virtuti 'virtus', generi 'genus', speciei 'species', ita substantiae 'substantia', ita qualitati 'qualitas', ita actioni 'actio', denique ita rei 'res'.

Itaque 'res' significat rem; hoc significatur, illud huius est signum vel nota; illud non vox, hoc vox est ideoque definitur: 'res est vox sive vocabulum, omnium vocabulorum significaciones sua complectens'. 'Ergo vocabulum', inquires, 'est supra res, quia res vocabulum est etiam'. Sed significatio 'rei' supra significacionem 'vocabuli' est, idest 'signi': et ideo vocabulum sive signum res est, et una res duntaxat. Illa autem vox omnes res significat...

Quapropter nihil interest utrum dicamus: 'quid est lignum?', 'quid est lapis?', 'quid ferrum?', 'quid homo?', an 'quid significat lignum, ferrum, lapis, homo?'. Quorum nihil de 'res' dici potest 'quid est res?' et 'quid res significat?', quoniam 'quid' resolvitur in 'quae res'. Ideo qui dicunt 'quid rei', stulte dicunt. At si interrogavero: 'quae vox est res?' recte respondebis, 'est vox significans omnium aliarum vocum intellectum sive sensum'; sed 'quae' idem paene nunc quod 'qualis' significat.

Denique significatio est vocis quae sub praedicamentum venit, quia 'praedicamentum' idem est quod vox universaliter significans. Res significata sub praedicamentum non venit, ut significatio vocis 'homo' sub praedicamento est; ipse autem homo qui significatur, sub tecto est aut sub caelo, non sub praedicamento, nec aliud est cum dicis 'homo est animal', quam hac appellatione 'homo' subauditur 'animal' sive subintelligitur significatio animalis.' I have altered Zippel's reading in paragraph 3, line 3 above from *suas* to *sua* as a result of Monfasani's suggestion, n. 44 above, p. 311. Accordingly my translation here now follows his. In using 'significant sounds' in lines 7 and 10 of the translation, I am trying to bring out the distinction between *vox* which seems here to mean the sound of the word and *verbum* which seems to mean the verbal sign as a whole, sound and meaning together. Valla pointed out that some authors made a distinction between *vox* (human or animal sound) and *sonus* (sound generally), *RDP*, p. 119, while others, including most Roman authors, make no distinction between the two words, *RDP*, pp. 119-120, 430-431. *Vox* here cannot mean 'word'.

<sup>46</sup> His suggestion that language names what is (which can be interpreted as a theory which relies on reference and excludes the idea that sense might differ from reference) seems to me unsustainable.

for everything that can be named there must be a corresponding thing which exists, Valla covers this difficulty by acknowledging the existence of a class of incorporeal things. This concession may require the elaboration of a metaphysics to explain how the being of incorporeal things differs from the being of corporeal things.

When Valla says that ‘what is a stone?’<sup>47</sup> means the same as ‘what does ‘stone’ mean?’, he implies that language (in this case the language of definition) expresses the nature of things perfectly. His statement also implies that the meaning of a word is the same as the thing which the word names. This would imply a theory of meaning dependent on reference alone (or one in which sense and reference are identical). My interpretation here is supported by Valla’s reference to Adam naming the animals, since Adamic language was usually regarded as a language of pure and perfect reference. But those who discuss Adamic language generally go on to contrast it with language after the fall or after Babel.<sup>48</sup> Valla does not here mention this crucial difference, rather he seems to suggest that the origin of language still informs its nature.

In the third and fourth paragraphs of the passage, Valla confronts one difficulty involved in holding that the meaning of a word is the same as the thing it names. One can say ‘‘res’ is a word’. But this might imply that ‘word’ is a broader term than ‘res’. If this were true, *res* could not be the transcendental. Valla replies that the meaning of ‘res’ is more general than the meaning of ‘word’. Whereas everything can be called ‘res’, only words can be called ‘word’. This just about preserves his position: one can appeal from the structure of a phrase to the realities signified by the words, and ‘‘res’ is a word’ involves an unusual kind of signifying. Even so the question of what reality is signified by *res* (everything or all signification) (392) is beginning to seem more problematic. Earlier Valla had said that *res* could not be defined. Now he claims to have defined the word ‘res’. This implies that there is a difference between the definition of a word and the definition of a thing, and this in turn damages the identity between things and the meanings of words. Of course Valla could reasonably

---

<sup>47</sup> I have inserted the indefinite article. The absence of articles in Latin leaves some ambiguity in questions like this.

<sup>48</sup> Some of the issues are brought out in G. Steiner, *After Babel* (Oxford, 1975), pp. 58-63, R. Fraser, *The Language of Adam* (New York, 1977), pp. 1-40. In the earlier version of this passage, which restricts itself to insisting that the meaning of language is instituted by humans, Valla mentions the tower of Babel, but only to suggest that perhaps God is responsible for human languages, since he then divided them all up. But he rapidly returns to the point that language is a human institution, *RDP*, pp. 433-434.

answer this objection by arguing that *res* is a special case.<sup>49</sup> But his solution to this problem does not seem as clear or as generalisable as the scholastic doctrine of material supposition.<sup>50</sup> This makes it harder to maintain his earlier position that understanding of context makes supposition theory unnecessary.

The real difficulty, however, remains the final paragraph.<sup>51</sup> Valla here seems to be using the distinction between the thing and the meaning of the word as a way of avoiding the problem of universals.<sup>52</sup> The contents of the categories are not things (earlier he had committed himself to the idea that they were) or words but the meanings of words. His earlier position required the identification of things (what is a man?) and word-meanings (what does the word 'man' mean?). Now, in order to avoid ascribing a real existence to 'man' and 'animal' in general, he wants to understand the categories on the level of meaning only. In order to do this properly he would have to develop a theory of meaning which involves some notion of abstraction, something he had rejected violently in the first version (373-4). Paragraph five wants to invoke the philosophical advantages of nominalism, but Valla has not set out the semantics, and in particular the metalinguistic distinctions, which this would require.

Some interpreters of Valla have used this section and the previous passage discussed to make the much more radical claim that Valla anticipated the ordinary language philosophy of the later Wittgenstein. Richard Waswo argues that Valla developed a relational semantics which regarded meaning as a function of the relations a word has with other words in place of the more traditional view that language is meaningful because of the reference of individual words to objects in the world.<sup>53</sup> In my opinion these passages (and the book as a whole) express Valla's view

---

<sup>49</sup> Also he does not actually state that *res* is undefinable in the later versions, though he may imply it, *RDP*, pp. 166, 392.

<sup>50</sup> A. Maierù, *Terminologia logica della tarda scolastica* (Rome, 1972), p. 296. See chapter 1, note 29 above

<sup>51</sup> Monfasani, cit in n. 44 above, finds no inconsistency here and comments 'it was standard scholastic doctrine that logic was a science not of extramental objects but of second intentions of the mind' (p. 319). My point is that prior to this paragraph Valla has rejected all such elaborations and distinctions and has tried to speak about logic's concern with things (*res*).

<sup>52</sup> Valla rejected the distinction between primary and secondary substances, (*RDP*, p. 160), but here it might have helped him.

<sup>53</sup> R. Waswo, 'The ordinary language philosophy of Lorenzo Valla', *Bibliothèque d'humanisme et renaissance*, 41 (1979), pp. 255-271 (on which M. Szymanski, 'Philosophy and Language', same journal, 44 (1982), pp. 149-152), *Language and Meaning in the Renaissance*, pp. 11-25, 88-113.

that language adequately describes what is in the world. For him truth depends on accurate knowledge of the world and correct representation of such knowledge. Salvatore Camporeale asserts that for Valla language was an aspect of social and historical reality, independent of metaphysics.<sup>54</sup> While it is true that Valla rejected Aristotelian metaphysics, Camporeale's view ignores the fact that Valla devoted the whole first book to explaining his own system of categories. Valla wanted to simplify metaphysics. He did not attempt to abolish the subject altogether, in the manner of Russell and Wittgenstein.

Both Waswo and Camporeale make much of Valla's references to the language of ordinary people, and to his studies of the uses of words. They suggest that in this way Valla anticipates Wittgenstein's famous pronouncement that the meaning of a word is its use for particular purposes (or within particular language games). But Valla's surveys of usage are like those of a classical grammarian (and especially like Quintilian). Typically he surveys a range of meanings in order to pick out those which are appropriate for his purposes. Furthermore he relies on definition as the 'royal judge' of meaning. His emphasis on definition, his use of the genus plus *differentia* method of defining, and indeed the whole effort of elaborating the categories would be quite inappropriate if he believed use within a particular language game to be the sole criterion of meaning. When Valla privileges ordinary usage or places an expression back into a context, he generally does so in order to discredit a particular technical usage.<sup>55</sup> Sometimes he takes sides against ordinary usage. In any case, as Tavoni has shown, what Valla calls ordinary or customary usage has nothing to do with the Latin or vernacular usage of his own time. Rather it depends on the usage of the best authors, and in particular of Quintilian.<sup>56</sup> What would an ordinary language philosopher make of the unnameability

<sup>54</sup> S. I. Camporeale, 'Lorenzo Valla *Repastinatio*', p. 233.

<sup>55</sup> Many readers feel that particular moves Valla makes resemble the tactics Wittgenstein uses against philosophical language (e.g. *Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford, 1974), I, 38, 116, *RDP*, 19, 226, 395-96) but Valla does not develop such arguments into a consistent position. Instead he uses them as part of a grammatical investigation which attacks Aristotle's terminology only to replace it with his own categories and his own notion of definition. Ordinary language philosophers would reject Valla's categories and definitions as much as they would Aristotle's.

<sup>56</sup> M. Tavoni, 'Lorenzo Valla e il volgare', pp. 199-216, *Latino, grammatica, volgare*, pp. 144-150, S. I. Camporeale, *Lorenzo Valla umanesimo*, pp. 101-108 (105), 149-152. Other humanists agree with Valla in making classical Latin the standard of Latin usage or even of usefulness. On the transfer of humanist ideas about language to the vernacular see Tavoni, C. Dionisotti, *Gli umanisti e il volgare fra Quattro e Cinquecento* (Florence, 1968), K. Meerhoff, *Rhétorique et poétique au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle en France* (Leiden, 1986), pp. 23-172.

of Valla's central category of substance? The passage under discussion is a very puzzling one, but this attempt to resolve it leads to a disproportionately large claim about the work as a whole.

If these objections are justified they offer an important test case for Valla's approach to philosophy. Valla was a philologist, a keen and devoted student of language. He wanted to justify theoretically what he intended to do in practice, that is, to study language and meaning as they function, ignoring metaphysics and semantics. Largely working from Aristotle, he constructed the simplest common-sense structure he could. Wherever possible he sought to avoid giving the opportunity for complex speculation by insisting on taking things in a literal everyday way. There was no problem about meaning: words named things. There was no problem about existence, what could be spoken about existed. The categories were easily resolved, since everything seen or thought was quality. The attempt to develop these positions and to evade further difficulties led Valla into self-contradictions which he was not prepared to acknowledge. Although he tried to develop a simple and comprehensive metaphysical theory he was not in the final analysis a systematic thinker. But in another way the failure of his system is not so disastrous. Even if Valla was unable to write a satisfactory antimetaphysics, he could still write about the argumentative use of language as though it had no metaphysical base. But we need to distinguish between the dialectic of books two and three and the philosophical structure he builds in book one. An ordinary language dialectician is entirely different from (and much more commonplace in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries than) an ordinary language philosopher.

#### *Attacks on Aristotelian Doctrines of Metaphysics*

Since there are many points of criticism, and since I am here more concerned with what was criticized than with how the attack was carried out, I shall restrict myself to fairly summary accounts of his attacks on six doctrines: the transcendentals, abstract concepts, matter and form, the property of taking more and less as a *differentia* of quality, the tree of Porphyry, and mathematical points.

#### *The Transcendentals*

In both versions of the text, though the order of treatment differs, chapters

two to five are devoted to Valla's attack on the transcendentals.<sup>57</sup> The transcendentals are terms like 'being', 'essence', 'unity', 'the good', 'the true' and 'quiddity', which because they may be used about any beings, transcend the categories. The main reasons Valla gives for wishing to abolish these terms is that the Latin words are ill-formed (*ens*, *essentia*, *quiditas*)<sup>58</sup> and that their meaning, as far as it can be determined, depends on or implies the word *res*. He does not address himself to the use to which these terms are put, or to the things which they enabled philosophers to discuss. In most cases where τὸ ὄν or *ens* are used, Valla simply replaces them with *res*.<sup>59</sup> The attack on the transcendentals is mainly directed against the Latin Aristotelian tradition, and in particular Thomas Aquinas, who makes considerable use of the distinction between being and essence, and who distinguishes six transcendentals in his *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate*.<sup>60</sup> Without *ens*, *esse*, and *essentia* Thomist metaphysics can hardly be carried on. Valla wanted to outlaw words like *ens*, *entitas*, *quiditas*, and *identitas* because he disliked them as words which were not sanctioned by classical usage or by classical principles of word-formation, and because he objected to the sorts of speculation they make possible.

His treatment of the concept of unity is more awkward. Valla argues that one cannot be a transcendental because it is a number and there are other numbers which it does not comprehend (381, 18-19). On the other

<sup>57</sup> *RDP*, pp. 366-381, 10-41.

<sup>58</sup> Valla objects to *quiditas* on the grounds that nouns ending in *-itas* can only be made from substantives, *RDP*, pp. 30-36, 371-373. He may have been particularly anxious to exclude this word in order to make room for his own key term *qualitas*.

<sup>59</sup> e.g. *RDP*, pp. 369, 13-15. Valla simply wants to close out speculations about the nature of being and about whether being adds anything to essence.

<sup>60</sup> *Metaphysics*, IV.1, V.3, H. Pouillon, 'Le premier traité des propriétés transcendentales, *Revue néoscholastique de philosophie*, 42 (1939), pp. 40-77 (on Philip the Chancellor, d. 1236), Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones de veritate*, q.1 art.1; *De ente et essentia*, ed. M. D. Roland Gosselin (Kain, 1926), pp. 1-8. Introductions to the questions in English are: Thomas Aquinas, *On Being and Essence*, translated with notes by A. Maurer (Toronto, 1968), J. F. Anderson, *An Introduction to the Metaphysics of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Chicago, 1953), J. F. Wippel, 'Essence and existence', in N. Kretzmann et al. ed., *Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1982), pp. 385-410. See also Zippel's notes to Valla's chapter. Ockham also attacked the transcendentals, and this is not the only point of similarity between him and Valla.

Valla attacks the way scholastic theologians use the transcendentals in his *Encomium S. Thomae* (1457), *Opera omnia*, II, p. 350: 'Quae longior foret ad disputandum materia, sed quæstio ab hoc tempore aliena: hoc dixisse sit satis, hos doctores ecclesiae latinos reformatissime vocabula, quæ auctores latinos, id est suos in loquendo magistros, graecarum litterarum eruditissimos numquam viderant usurpasse, quæ novi theologi semper inculcant, ens, entitas, quiditas, identitas, reale, essentiale, suum esse, et verba illa, quæ dicuntur, ampliari, dividi, componi, et alia huius modi.'

hand when he elaborates his own idea of substance, in the discussion of fire quoted above, fire is seen as the subject which underlies and unites the different qualities of heat, light and flickering. He concludes the passage by saying that substance will be a single thing.<sup>61</sup> So Valla makes use of the concept of unity in defining a substance even if he can find reasons for rejecting it as a transcendental.

### *Abstract Concepts*

Valla makes his attack on the idea of abstraction only in the first version. Before launching his attack on the doctrine of the 'concrete' and 'abstract' uses of words naming qualities, a doctrine which Ockham also attacked,<sup>62</sup> he remarks:

But first of all one ought to mock their belief that quality can exist without any subject or at any rate that quality can be separated mentally. They call abstract, words like 'whiteness', 'blackness'. I do not remember ever thinking of things like this even when I was burning with a fever. For whoever pictures these things must imagine them united with some subject or substance: either snow, or a cloud, or a wall, or a piece of clothing, if he thinks of whiteness: or again coal, or a crow, or a piece of clothing, or a cave, or night-time, if he is thinking of black. But these people want to imagine man, horse, lion, animal without any individual instance. Not even angels could grasp this with their imaginations. But let us pass over these inanities.<sup>63</sup>

It is easy to understand why Valla left this passage out of the later versions. He seems to be trying, as he is throughout his discussion of concrete and abstract, to remove the possibility of speaking in any way that goes outside sense experience and ordinary language. This paragraph goes much further and condemns any act of mental abstraction from particulars whether it concerns qualities apart from substances or generalisations of any kind. If he were to stand by this paragraph he would need to retract much of what

---

<sup>61</sup> *RDP*, p. 365. See note 16 above.

<sup>62</sup> *Summa Logicae*, I.5. The distinction between concrete and abstract is often used to introduce other aspects of metaphysics, e.g. Thomas Aquinas, *On Being and Essence*, pp. 14-15. On p. 383 Valla mocks Aquinas's distinction between *natura naturans* and *natura naturata*.

<sup>63</sup> *RDP*, pp. 373-374: 'Atque ante omnia deridendum quod volunt qualitatem posse esse sine subiecto, aut certe cogitatione fingi: quod 'abstractum' appellant, ut 'albedinem', 'nigredinem' et similia, qualia ne febri quidem aestuantem, memini me aliquando finxisse. Quicunque enim haec imaginatur, una quoque subiectum sive substantiam imaginantur: aut nivem aut nubem aut parietem aut vestem, si de alboe cogitat: rursus aut carbonem aut corvum aut vestem aut cavernam aut nocturnum tempus, si de nigrore. At isti fingi volunt posse hominem, equum, leonem, animal, sine aliquo individuo: quod nec angeli ipsi imaginatione assequi possent. Verum haec vana omittamus.'

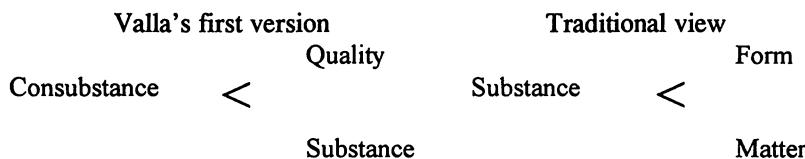
he goes on to say about quality.

### *Matter and Form*

In his criticism of the transcendentals and the doctrine of concrete and abstract, Valla is mainly attacking Aristotle's followers. With form and matter, he takes on a doctrine which is fundamental to Aristotle's whole system.<sup>64</sup> The arguments he makes differ between the first and the later versions, but he soon reaches the same conclusion in both cases. He does not consider the problems which the doctrine of form and matter aimed to solve, nor does he offer his own solution to them.

In the first version Valla concentrates his attack on a definition, which he attributes to Aristotle, 'form is what gives being to a thing and keeps it in being'. In fact this definition comes from Peter of Spain's version of the topics.<sup>65</sup> Valla reduces this definition to absurdity by supplying 'res' as an antecedent for what, and by substituting 'res' for 'esse', in line with his attack on the transcendentals. Once he has got three occurrences of 'res' into the definition he abandons it and concludes that form is quality, 'whatever it may be that they want to mean by it'.

'I do not see what they mean by 'matter' unless it is substance'.<sup>66</sup> He will take it this way, even though what is called 'matter' in ordinary usage contains quality as well as substance (382). This leaves him with a position in which, once he has supplied 'consubstance' as the main category for independent beings (402), the parallel implicit in this reduction of matter and form becomes clear.



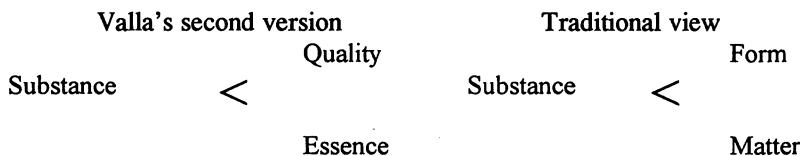
<sup>64</sup> The purpose of the doctrine is to allow something to retain its identity while undergoing change. The doctrine plays a large part in *Physics*, *De coelo*, *De generatione et corruptione* and *Metaphysics*, especially in book Z. Students of dialectic would come across the doctrine in the topics, since matter and form are two of the four types of cause, a distinction from *Physics*, 194b16-195b30, which Boethius incorporates, *PL*, 64, 1189C-1190A.

<sup>65</sup> *RDP*, pp. 381-382, Peter of Spain, *Tractatus*, p. 68: 'Forma est quae dat esse rei et conservat eam in esse', Peter's definition is quite consonant with Aristotle's discussions of form in *Physics*, II, 1-3 and *Metaphysics*, D 2, Z 8, L 1-3, but the way Valla treats the definition as Aristotle's own is another indication of how cavalier he is with the distinction between Aristotle and his followers.

<sup>66</sup> *RDP*, p. 382: 'Verum tamen forma, quicquid sit, quod per eam significare volunt, qualitas est...Materiam vero quid intelligere velint, nisi substantiam, non video.'

This similarity is deceptive since Valla's doctrine of substance and quality aims to account for the relation between perception and underlying unity,<sup>67</sup> whereas the doctrine of form and matter was devised to accommodate change.

When Valla sets out his revised view of substance he compares his new scheme with the Aristotelian division of form and matter (46), though the way the terms are used does not encourage the comparison.



Valla hardly used his concept of essence but its main function, of serving as a focus of unity for the qualities of definable beings, only agrees with Aristotle's conception of matter in so far as it is incapable of being perceived directly.<sup>68</sup>

In chapter twelve, Valla explains that he has not agreed with the doctrine of form and matter but has only gone along with it (110-122). He objects, first, that whereas there is one matter for each body, there is not one form but many. This objection applies to his construction of form (in which form equals quality, which refers mainly to the objects of sensory perception) but not to Aristotle's. Secondly, he objects that the doctrine of form and matter makes the substance which should be a simple unity into a composite. Neither part can exist without the other. Aristotle would agree with this point, and in fact he makes it himself. Just as Valla allows for an intellectual distinction between substance and the qualities of an object we can perceive, so Aristotle allows that matter and form can be thought of as separate, while at the same time he insists on their unity. Although a given matter can never be without form, it may have different forms at different times. A particular form may separate from a particular matter but the matter will have to take on some other form.<sup>69</sup> Valla's criticism here depends on a partial and hostile interpretation of Aristotle.

---

<sup>67</sup> This is putting it too elliptically, but see the discussion of Valla's categories above.

<sup>68</sup> It is also odd for anyone who knows Aristotle to equate matter with essence. *Metaphysics*, 1028b31-1029a34.

<sup>69</sup> *Metaphysics*, 1033a24-1034b8.

His third criticism is directed at the concept of prime matter and at the idea of form without matter or matter without form. He considers that these ideas cannot be imagined because they have no image. He recalls that in ordinary speech ('O, Peripatetic school, depravers of native meaning') both form (shape) and matter (material of which something is made) can be considered aspects of quality (111). Finally he mocks Aristotle's comparisons between the desire of matter for form, ugliness's desire of beauty and women's need of men. He regards Aristotle's choice of comparators as one-sided and absurd.<sup>70</sup>

Valla's criticisms here do not seem to match the importance of the doctrine he is attempting to demolish. His failure to discuss the problems the doctrine was intended to solve makes what he substitutes for it seem impoverished and inadequate. Perhaps he simply did not understand the functions of Aristotle's distinction between form and matter. There is, however, a way in which Valla's philosophical naiveté does not seem quite so debilitating. The doctrine of form and matter has, after all, been discarded. It was an intellectual construction which aimed to 'save' the possibility of identity through change. A good part of its explanatory power lay in the fact that it was hard to pin down. If this view can be defended, then one should not dismiss Valla's criticism (particularly his second and third points) out of hand.

#### *The Property of Taking More and Less*

In the *Categories*, Aristotle had distinguished quality from substance on the grounds that substance does not 'receive more and less', whereas quality does.<sup>71</sup> Valla rejects this observation aggressively in both versions,<sup>72</sup> pointing out that the property of receiving more and less is a grammatical difference, by which adjectives, or words with adjectival force, can be distinguished from nouns. He gives examples in which nouns of quality (colour, taste, sound) will not receive more and less and adjectives of substance (stony, marble) will. He then produces some examples of nouns of substance receiving more and less: 'the man who is born a citizen is more a citizen than the man made one', 'this is more vinegar than wine', 'this hermaphrodite is more a man than a woman'.<sup>73</sup> He reminds Aristotle

<sup>70</sup> *Physics*, 192a22-24

<sup>71</sup> *Categories*, 3a33-3b10.

<sup>72</sup> *RDP*, pp. 383-386, 156-161.

<sup>73</sup> *RDP*, pp. 386, 158: 'magis civis qui natus quam qui factus'; p. 159: 'hoc est magis acetum quam vinum', 'hic hermaphroditus est magis vir quam femina.'

that the *Categories* also say that man (the species) is more substance than animal (the genus), because it is closer to primary substance (a doctrine which Valla rejects in passing as an unnecessary further complication).<sup>74</sup>

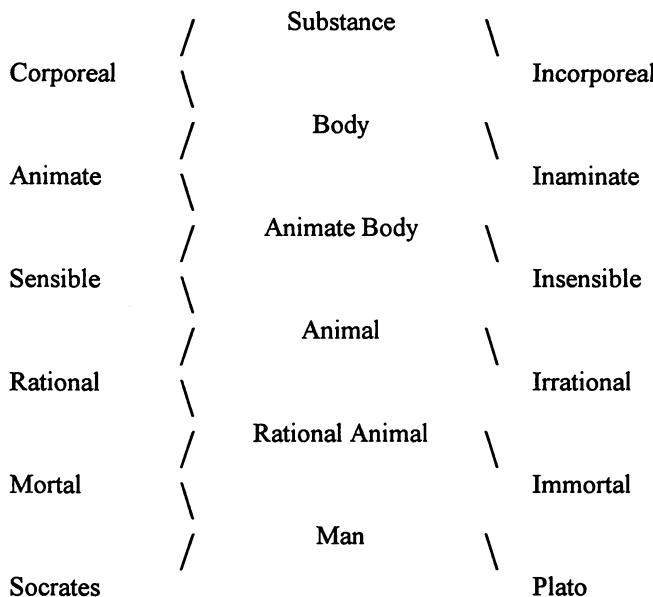
All one can complain of here is overkill. Valla tries to show that Aristotle is wrong in every imaginable way and overcomplicates his own account in order to do so. The point on which he has caught Aristotle out is a small one, which assumes more significance because of the way in the *Categories* he likes to set out distinctions in relation to ways people speak; but the criticisms made are very striking.

### *The Tree of Porphyry*

The tree of Porphyry, which is found in Boethius's commentary on *Isagoge*, is a diagram which aims to show how the most general genus, in this case substance, is linked to the individual object or person through a hierarchy of genera and species. Within each genus a choice of species must be made, according to the presence or absence of a *differentia*, for example corporality, sensation, mortality. At each level the tree diagram takes up only one of the two choices available at the level above. Thus the diagram gives only a segment of the full analysis of the category of substance, but it is enough to show how the metalanguage Porphyry outlines can be used to trace objects or properties back to their ultimate genera. After Boethius the scheme was very widely adopted in commentaries on *Isagoge* and *Categories*, and in elementary manuals of dialectic.

---

<sup>74</sup> *RDP*, pp. 159-160. Aristotle admitted this, saying he was making a different point. *Categories*, 3b35.



In his criticism of this scheme, Valla points out that the soul cannot both be 'incorporeal substance' at the same level as 'corporeal substance' and also the *differentia* between animate and inanimate body, at the next level down. The initial division between corporeal and incorporeal substance will also cause man to be classified under both halves of the tree, since man combines corporeal and incorporeal. Valla recalls that Aristotle concedes souls to trees and plants, which makes it impossible for soul to function (at level 2) as a *differentia* of animals. He does not believe that the category of immortal animals (level 5) is appropriate, since this is hardly the way to speak about angels.<sup>75</sup>

In the first version, he had also made some caustic remarks about the position of God on the tree (? also an immortal animal), had rejected the distinction which deprives other animals of reason (a position he elaborates in his chapter on the soul) and, recalling the resurrection of the body, objected to man being called mortal (391).

The point here, which is well made and which attacks the tradition more than it attacks Aristotle, is that this system of classification is certainly not consistent with a Christian world view and is of doubtful internal

<sup>75</sup> *RDP*, pp. 389-391, 46-49.

consistency. It was important to make such an attack on something which continued to be taught in every basic dialectic course. Some of Valla's points are anticipated in Albertus Magnus's commentary on *Isagoge*, but Albertus's criticisms had not caused the doctrine to be revised or discarded.<sup>76</sup>

### *Mathematical Points*

Valla rejects the doctrines that mathematical points occupy no space, that they are the ends of lines not the constituents of lines and that a line has no width, as part of his case that quantity is not a separate category but a part of quality. His main argument is that these doctrines are inconsistent and mysterious. He prefers a 'common-sense' view that points and lines are two dimensional marks on pieces of paper.<sup>77</sup> In taking this position he is presumably aiming at consistency, in denying existence to purely mental concepts. In fact he demonstrates his ignorance of the problems involved in establishing the basis of mathematics. It is an instance of his being prepared to make confident pronouncements outside his field of competence. This is a consequence of his not accepting that within some subjects, considerations particular to that subject can be more important than common-sense and a knowledge of languages.

### *Valla's importance as a philosophical critic of Aristotle*

Valla deserves some credit for realising that Aristotelian logic is so closely involved with his system of metaphysics that an attempt to reform his logic involves a reform of metaphysics as well. Equally one is inclined to admire a person who questioned a system of ideas that everyone else took for granted. Since Valla wishes to base his logic on language as it is, he is entitled, in his own terms, to use linguistic criteria to criticize the vocabulary of metaphysics, and obliged to set out a world-view which corresponds as far as possible to the way people ordinarily speak about things. In doing this Valla has to confront the problems which first gave rise to metaphysics: the status of universal concepts, the relations between what can be perceived and what exists, the idea of change. But Valla is confronting these problems en route to something else. It appears as if he needs to solve them or bypass them in any way he can; he is not concerned

---

<sup>76</sup> Albertus Magnus, *Liber de praedicabilibus*, Tract IV, Cap. 3-4, *Opera Omnia*, ed. A Borgalt, I (Paris, 1890), pp. 62-66.

<sup>77</sup> RDP, pp. 428-430, 143-147, *Categories*, 4b24-5a23, PL 64, 202-205, *Metaphysics*, 1001b16-1002b11.

to understand the range of problems which concepts like form and matter respond to, nor does he do much to meet the objections which his system is open to. He is interested in exceptions, problems and difficulties when they concern language, not when they occur in abstract thought. Valla's positive metaphysics is highly individual (though it often betrays its Aristotelian basis) and at times not very profound.

Similar reservations can be entered about Valla's criticisms. He dismisses some notions very hastily and after inadequate argument, in order to set out his own views which replace them. His objections do not take sufficient account of what a given doctrine is trying to achieve. On the other hand some of his criticisms of detail are acute and well-founded. Some of those which are not, even so, strike at weak or problematic aspects of the Aristotelian system. His criticisms are sufficiently damaging to deserve a response from the Aristotelians. They merit the respect of philosophers regardless of the strength or weakness of his positive system.

Two further points might be made in view of Valla's reputation as a philologist and the way the book has previously been described. First, book one is entirely devoted to philosophical issues and much of the argument is carried out in a philosophical manner. This contrasts with the prevalent view that Valla is working in a rhetorical manner. It is also worth pointing out that Valla's philosophical criticism makes little use of the sense of history which he cultivates so assiduously in his studies of the Latin language. He makes no attempt to understand Aristotelian positions in the light of the problems they are trying to solve, or of the shortcomings of earlier solutions. He does not attempt to make distinctions between Aristotle's own views and those of his followers. He judges Aristotle on the basis of his own understanding of the language of the Latin translation rather than of the Greek text. His own understanding of certain terms is intruded into sentences in which another meaning is intended, in order to make nonsense of them. This makes a very strong contrast with the method required in reading older literary texts.<sup>78</sup>

A more open-minded historical view of philosophical language can be found in Pico's famous letter to Barbaro, where he argues that scholastic Latin might be thought of as an independent language with its own rules of usage rather than as a debased form of classical Latin. The letter is

---

<sup>78</sup> Jill Krays suggests to me that the same is true of the handling of Epicurus and the Stoics in *De vero bono*, as though Valla approached philosophical issues in an entirely different spirit from the patient historical reconstruction he employs in *Elegantiae* and other more grammatical works.

notoriously difficult to interpret and some of the points it makes on behalf of scholastic philosophy are almost certainly ironic. The point I have mentioned, however, is so strong, and so in tune with the best humanist method that I prefer to take it as seriously meant. Whether or not the Pico-Barbaro controversy was a real argument (and I think there was at least some serious disagreement about reading scholastic philosophy), Pico's telling attack on those who reject serious thinkers purely on grammatical or stylistic grounds evidently finds a target in Valla.<sup>79</sup>

*A list of points on which Valla contradicts Aristotle*

1. There are three categories and not ten. 363, 8-10, 46-50, 112, *Categories*, 1b25-2a4.
2. Relatives should not be part of the categories. 425, *Categories*, 6a36-8b25.
3. Quantity is part of quality. 425, *Categories*, 4b20-6a36.
4. All the other categories can be reduced to quality and action. 438, 112-115, *Categories*, 1b25-2a4.
5. The term *ens* has no force. 369, 13-15, *Metaphysics*, 1003a28-32.
6. It is impossible to do the right thing unjustly. 379-380, 20-21, *Ethics*, 1134a16.
7. The distinction between form and matter is either frivolous or deceitful. 382, 110-112, *Metaphysics*, 1070a19-30.
8. The property of not taking more and less belongs to nouns grammatically and not to substances logically. 384, 157, *Categories*, 3b33-4a10.
9. Valla rejects the Aristotelian idea of the medium between contraries. 387, *Categories*, 12a1-25, *Ethics*, 2, 6-9.
10. Good and bad are more contrary than good and not good, 389, (162-3). *De interpretatione*, 23b33-24b9.
11. *Res* is the *genus* to which the categories belong, 392. Boethius, *PL* 64, 170D, 180B.
12. Aristotle's definition of definition is vague and empty. 400, 168, *Topica*, 101b37.

---

<sup>79</sup> E. Garin ed., *Prosatori latini del quattrocento* (Milan, 1952), pp. 804-823 (818, 822). Translation by Q. Breen, 'Giovanni Pico della Mirandola on the conflict of Philosophy and Rhetoric', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 13 (1952), pp. 384-412, reprinted in his *Christianity and Humanism* (Grand Rapids, 1968), pp. 1-38. B. Vickers, *In Defence of Rhetoric* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 184-196 argues that Pico and Barbaro are really saying the same thing. L. Panizza and K. Webb are preparing a new English translation with a study of the work's irony.

13. Secondary substance is unintelligible. 160, *Categories*, 2b13-19.
14. Aristotle's idea of God is mistaken. 53-58, *Metaphysics*, 1072b24-1073a13, 1074a35-b10.
15. Trees and Plants do not have souls. 59-60, *De anima*, 411b27-30.
16. There are only three qualities of the mind (memory, intellect and *affectus*). 409, 61-63, 66-67, *De anima*, 414a29-b9.
17. Animals possess reason. 409-410, 67-73, *De anima*, 429a5-9.
18. The common sense does not exist. 73, *Parva naturalia*, 449a5-11.
19. The notion of habit is of no significance in ethics. 77-78, *Categories*, 8b26-9a10.
20. There are various intermediate stages between disposition and *habitus*. 418, 79, *Categories*, 8b26-9a10.
21. Virtue is not a mean between contraries. 417-418, 79-84, *Ethics*, 1120a23-1121a7.
22. The soul is not a *tabula rasa*. 418, *De anima*, 429a12-28.
23. The stars vibrate. 98, *De coelo*, 289b32-33.
24. Lead does not dissolve when it travels at speed. 99, *De coelo*, 289a21-28.
25. Aristotle's explanation of shooting stars is incorrect. 100, *Meteorologia*, 341b1-34.
26. Fire is not the excess of heat, nor ice the excess of cold. 102, *De generatione et corruptione*, 330b25-30.
27. The theory of the four elements is incorrect. 103-109, *De generatione et corruptione*, II, 3-4.
28. Air does not become water by becoming more dense. 104-105, *Physics*, 217a27-33.
29. Vapour is not dry and wet. 107, *Meteorologia*, 340b26-28.<sup>80</sup>
30. Aristotle's conceptions of potential and ἐντελέχεια are absurd. 128-129, *Metaphysics*, 1048b35-1049b2.
31. There are not six kinds of motion but only one.<sup>81</sup> 436-438, 132-133, *Categories*, 15a13-b17.
32. Lines do not have longitude without latitude. 428-429, 143-144, *Metaphysics*, 1016b26, 1020a14 [Or Boethius's *Categories* commentary, *PL* 64, 204].
33. Points are parts of lines. 429-430, 144-147, *Metaphysics*, 1090b5-20 [Or, more probably, *PL* 64, 204-205].

<sup>80</sup> Valla's point here may depend on a misconception.

<sup>81</sup> Some of the types are reduced to change of quality (*mutatio*).

34. Sense perception is active not passive. 445-446, 154-156, *De anima*, 416b32-418a6.
35. Denominative, equivocal and univocal are issues in grammar, not dialectic. 451-452, 181-183, *Categories*, 1a1-15.
36. Valla attacks the conversion of propositions. 189-190, *Prior Analytics*, 25a1-b25.
37. The negative should not be applied to the noun. 472-475, 215-219, *De interpretatione*, 16a30, 19b38.
38. The square of contraries is wrong. 477-491, 224-235, *De interpretatione*, 17a37-18a28.
39. There are not four kinds of opposite, but two. 497-499, 235-236, *Categories*, 11b15-13b35.
40. The system of six kinds of modal proposition is mistaken. 491-493, 237-238, *De interpretatione*, 21a34-36.
41. Aristotle's definition of syllogism is not specific enough. 528-529, 280-281, *Prior Analytics*, 24b18-20.
42. Many of the moods of the syllogism are pointless. 546-548, 297-300, *Prior Analytics*, 31a19-32a5.
43. Valla attacks Aristotle's use of letters to represent terms in his discussion of the syllogism. 548, 299-300, *Prior Analytics*, 25a14-31b36 and *passim*.
44. Valla adds many new types of syllogism (syllogism in whole and parts, all negative syllogisms, all particular and all singular syllogisms, syllogisms based on words) 535-537, 543-546, 553-555, 282, 289-291, 304-306. Cf. *Prior Analytics*, 41b6-30.
45. Valla adds other forms of argumentation (chains of syllogisms, sorites, interrogation, dilemma). 556-563, 306-312.
46. It is futile to attempt a systematic treatment of errors. 575-576, 328, 334, *Sophistical Refutations*.
47. Aristotle's account of induction is mistaken. 587-592, 345-349, *Topica*, 105a13-18.
48. Aristotle's definition of time is incorrect. 439-440, 150, *Physics*, 220b32.<sup>82</sup>

---

<sup>82</sup> I owe several of these Aristotle references (including most of the scientific ones) to Zippel's notes. It would be possible to draw up similar lists for other authors Valla criticized. In particular Valla criticizes a number of doctrines from Boethius's commentaries on Aristotle and his handbooks (such as the tree of Porphyry, the habit of setting out verbs as copula with predicate, and the arrangement of syllogism, induction, enthymeme and example as four kinds of proof).

*Valla's views on other subjects*

As the above list demonstrates, Valla expresses his opinions on many subjects outside dialectic and metaphysics. This is consistent with his claim that his book is a refoundation of philosophy. It was an important part of his aim to catch Aristotle in error on a wide range of doctrines, and to assert that his own system could account for things that are problematic in Aristotle. In the later versions he makes many additions to his remarks on physics, ethics, psychology, theology and zoology.<sup>83</sup> The later version of the preface draws particular attention to his remarks on ethics and natural philosophy (7).

Within the structure of the book, the location of these discussions, chiefly in the chapters on the contents of the category of substance, is fairly arbitrary. For example whereas the first version gives a brief account of 'vegetable *corpus*', in the second version this is reduced to a line (420, 49), but in order to make his points about the theory of the four elements and Aristotle's ideas about astronomy Valla introduces a whole new section. This also leads to a second division of *corpus* (heavenly/non-heavenly (98)), which is not coordinated with the first.<sup>84</sup> In the later versions, the general indications of the content of each subdivision are virtually omitted while a great deal more detail and argument is added to the criticism of particular doctrines. The classification of substance has turned into a sequence of specific criticisms.

On the other hand thematic links with the main argument can be established. Some of Valla's excursions serve to show that his system can be extended and applied. One might take as an example his suggestion in the first version that his account of the relationship between quality and consubstance can be used to set out the doctrine of the Trinity in a clear way (403-406).

It can also be argued that some of Valla's comments promote his aim of placing the doctrines of Christianity above the teachings of the philosophers, rather than the other way round. The strong attack which he launches on Aristotle's account of the soul of man is an example of this. By contrast Valla's own account of the soul, divided into three faculties, memory, will and reason, recalls St Augustine (59-71). In the *Encomium S.*

---

<sup>83</sup> For example numbers 18-25 above (and others) only appear in the later versions.

<sup>84</sup> *RDP*, p. 49 divides *corpus* into vegetable and non-vegetable, non-vegetable into golden and not golden. Compare n. 28 above.

*Thomae*, he rejects the complications of scholastic theology and proposes St Paul as the model theologian.<sup>85</sup>

A third motif which can be discerned is a wish to make the understanding of reality correspond with the ordinary way of talking. This seems to be the motive for Valla attacking Aristotle's theory of six kinds of motion and replacing it with the 'ordinary' notion of changing location. Perhaps this is because *kinesis* means 'change' as well as 'motion', whereas *motus* (the traditional Latin translation) has only the latter meaning.<sup>86</sup> Another example might be his insistence, against Aristotle, that animal souls are like human souls (that is they have will, memory and reason) except that the former are more limited, and mortal (66-71). This argument justifies Valla's classification of substance against Porphyry's.

The fourth theme, which is perhaps the strongest, is his wish to attack details of Aristotelian teaching wherever he thinks there is a weakness to be exploited. This is evident in some of the asides. Near the start of a section where he will be concerned with the four elements and the motion of the stars, Valla digresses momentarily to examine a quotation from Aristotle about lead dissolving when travelling at great speed (98). After ridiculing the suggestion, he asks how, if Aristotle can be wrong on something so easily verifiable, he can be trusted to pronounce on matters beyond the reach of sense perceptions. Valla's continual pursuit of Aristotle can seem unbalanced but it has a serious point. Part of the strength and endurance of Aristotle's system lies in the number of issues in different fields which he pronounced on, and in the belief that many of these doctrines stand together, lending each other support. In this context Valla supports his argument that Aristotle made mistakes about logic and metaphysics, if he can point to his errors in a range of other subjects.

In some of his pronouncements these considerations are mixed. One of the most interesting sections of the whole book is that in which he displaces the four cardinal virtues and replaces them with true pleasure, equivalent to love (73-98). In places this demonstration is shocking, as it was in *De vero bono*, but its aim is to promote a Christian basis for morality. Valla's thought is Christian, though it is certainly not traditional or orthodox. He explicitly rejects the commonplaces of Stoic and Aristotelian ethics which had become mingled with Christian views. In this Valla shows himself sternly opposed to the syncretic tendencies shown both by scholastic

---

<sup>85</sup> *Opera omnia*, II, p. 350.

<sup>86</sup> I owe this suggestion to Jill Kraye.

theology and by much humanist philosophy. In his discussions of cosmology, which are generally less impressive, Valla has some recourse to Christian arguments about the perfection of God's creation (100), but his main aim is to knock away arguments about the heavens and the four elements, which he quotes from Aristotle but which are in fact commonplaces of Greek thought.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### VALLA'S CONTRIBUTION TO LOGIC

Valla's contribution to logic proper combines criticism of particular Aristotelian doctrines with an attempt to rewrite the rules of logic in order to make them apply to natural language. Most of the chapters in books two and three of *Repastinatio* are concerned with four aspects of logic: the proposition and the *signa*,<sup>1</sup> the square of contraries, proof and argument, and the forms of argumentation. I shall begin by considering Valla's contribution in these four areas. I shall then discuss his briefer observations on other aspects of Aristotelian logic (contrary words, predicables, modal propositions, sophisms and scholastic logic). Finally I shall consider Valla's view of the relationship between logic and language.

#### *The Proposition and the signa*

The first nine chapters of book two are given over to the proposition. Valla accepts Aristotle's basic division of propositions according to quantity (universal or particular) and quality (affirmative or negative). He introduces the word 'sign', which refers to the quantifiers and the markers of negation. Valla does not understand why the Aristotelians want to 'resolve' verbs into the form 'copula plus participle' ('Plato reads' always becomes 'Plato is reading') rather than the other way round. He also regrets the way such resolution obliterates tense and mood, which are useful in expression (179-181).

To the usual division between universal and particular propositions, he adds singulars ('this horse'), and indefinites ('horse'). He shows with examples that the indefinite is usually equivalent to the universal. He finds a further interpretation, which he calls 'total' in propositions like 'man is a

---

<sup>1</sup> In this work Valla uses the term *signa* for the indicators of quality and quantity (words like *omnis*, *aliquis*, *non*, but also certain adverbs such as *semper*, *nunquam*). The use of the term is not to be confused with Quintilian's use of *signa* (*Institutio oratoria*, 5.9, quoted in *RDP*, pp. 501-503, 246-249) to mean evidence which has to be interpreted. In my discussion of *RDP* books two and three I shall refer only to the later versions unless there is a point of difference to draw attention to.

'species' (185-188). Scholastic logic termed this 'simple supposition'.<sup>2</sup>

The largest component of this group of chapters is a detailed analysis of the effect on the quantity of the proposition of all the available Latin quantifying terms and marks of negation, separately and in combination. Valla gives many examples, from which he draws his general conclusions, noting unusual and exceptional cases when they occur (190-215).

There is every reason to respect this kind of analysis. It is a necessary concomitant of attempting to use all the Latin language's resources of quantification and negation instead of a small set of terms defined to behave in particular ways in the special context of logical propositions (themselves a restricted subset of the sentence forms available in natural language). It is important that Valla discusses the quantifying effect of a number of demonstrative adjectives, and adverbs (including adverbs of time) alongside the adjectives of quantity. What emerges is a thorough classification of the functions of a group of related Latin words, carried out in the painstaking way one would expect from the author of the *Elegantiae*. There are also a few surprising discoveries.

Valla finds that *quidam*, the word which the Latin Aristotelians always prefer as a marker of particular quantity (i.e. the equivalent of 'some' in 'some elephants are grey'),<sup>3</sup> is unsuited for this function, since in ordinary usage it has an overtone of definiteness ('one, a certain') which can be restrictive compared with *aliquis* ('any'). The subject in a particular proposition needs to refer to 'some or any of class x', not 'a particular one of class x' (195-196). Next Valla discovers by analysis that for most of the *signa* of particularity, applying negation to the particular proposition results in a negative universal proposition. That is, '*aliquis non legit*' means that no one at all is reading, not that some people are not reading. This discovery leads him to suggest that in general negation added to a particular sign results in a negative universal proposition. He finds that *nonnullus* is an exception to this rule since propositions involving *nonnullus* preserve

---

<sup>2</sup> On supposition generally see: *Tractatus*, pp. 79-83, P. V. Spade, 'The Semantics of Terms', N. Kretzmann et al. eds., *The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1982), hereafter *CHLMP*, pp. 188-196, L. M. de Rijk, *Logica Modernorum*, 2 vols in 3 (Assen, 1962-67), vol. 2 part 1, pp. 560-598, 'Origins of the Theory of the Properties of Terms', *CHLMP*, pp. 161-173.

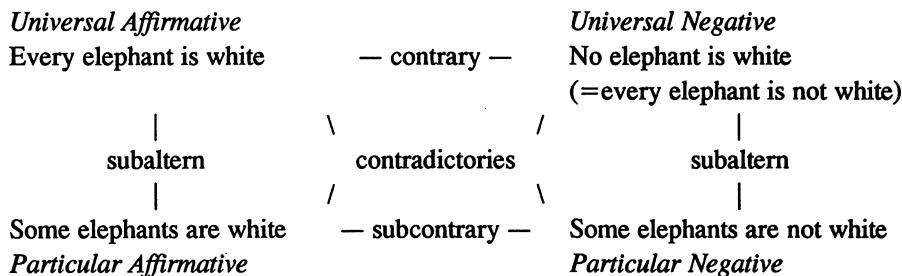
<sup>3</sup> In the printed sources I have consulted, *quidam* is always used by scholastic logicians as the indicator of particular quantity, even though *aliquis* is often used to translate τις, notably in the category of relatives (*ad aliquid*). L. Minio-Paluello ed., *De interpretatione, Aristoteles Latinus*, II, 1-2 (Bruges, 1965), gives *aliquis* as the normal translation of τις but the texts use *quidam* as the sign of particularity.

particularity under negation. He regards this unusual result, however, as a consequence of the aberrant (universal based) formation of the word, rather than as evidence that *nonnullus* should become the preferred sign of particularity (205-209).

He argues at length that the position of the negative in universal propositions does not effect the quantity of the proposition. He holds that both '*non omnis*' and '*omnis non*' with a common term and a predicate yield a biparticular, that is they indicate that some do and some do not (199-202). His analysis of sentences involving '*est nescius*', '*est ignorans*', '*nescit*', '*ignorat*' and '*non scit*' reveals that negation combined with nouns and participles has an effect on quantity which is both different from that of negation in '*non*' and differs according to which of the two negative prefixes (*in-* or *ne-*) is employed in the combination (203-204, 210-213). Any logician can respect the exhaustiveness and care of Valla's analyses here, though a modern logician might also be reminded of the advantages of formal languages constructed and defined to handle negation simply. Apart from the correction of some details, Valla's work on the proposition can be regarded as an extension of Aristotle's.

### *The Square of Contraries*

Aristotle uses the square of contraries to set out the relationship between the truth and falsehood of the four different types of proposition he has identified.<sup>4</sup>



In this diagram 'every elephant is white' is contrary to 'no elephant is white', contradictory to 'some elephants are not white', and its subaltern is

<sup>4</sup> Although the square of contraries and the rules can easily be extracted from Aristotle, the formulation is the work of commentators summarized and passed on by Boethius. *De interpretatione*, 17a38-18a13, 19b30-36. This version is from Peter of Spain, *Tractatus*, pp. 6-7.

'some elephants are white'. 'Some elephants are white' and 'some elephants are not white' are subcontraries.

According to this scheme: (1) only one of a pair of contraries can be true, neither need be true; (2) both subcontraries can be true; (3) of a pair of contradictories, one must be true and the other false; (4) if the universal is true, its subaltern will also be; if the particular is false, its subaltern universal will also be. The appeal of this system is that it accounts on formal grounds and in an economical and comprehensive way for the relations of truth and falsehood holding among a logically complete group of propositions. Valla's treatment of the square of contraries involves rejecting and completely rewriting the Aristotelian doctrine.

Taking the contraries first, Valla objects to the rule that both can be false. How can two things which are false be contrary to each other? When we say that 'all horses are white' and 'no horses are white' are both false, in Valla's view we mean that both propositions are partly true and partly false. The truth in each is the contrary of the falsehood in the other. Valla suggests that with contraries (i.e. at the level of universal quantity), there are really three possibilities. When the predicate is a perpetual attribute, either (1) the affirmative is true and the negative false ('all elephants are animals', 'no elephants are animals') or (2) the affirmative is false and the negative true ('all elephants are fish', 'no elephants are fish'). In cases in which variable attributes are predicated the further possibility arises (3) that each proposition is partly true and partly false ('all elephants are wild', 'no elephants are wild') (224-226).<sup>5</sup>

Valla recognizes that it is an established convention of language that whatever is not wholly true is called false (224). At the same time his threefold solution makes a distinction which is worth attending to between the truth statuses of 'all elephants are wild' and 'all elephants are fish'.

He objects even more strongly to the rule that both subcontraries can be true. In Valla's view, one can only say that the two propositions 'some elephants are wild' and 'some elephants are not wild' are both true if one changes the reference of the 'some elephants' in each case (227-230). Valla is extremely sarcastic about a passage from *De syllogismo categorico* in which Boethius argues for the possibility that both subcontraries can be true by taking as an example the propositions '*homo grammaticus est*' and

---

<sup>5</sup> Valla adds here an attack on Boethius's handling of an indefinite proposition ('*homo grammaticus est*'), because although Boethius classes indefinites with particulars, Valla (correctly) puts them with universals. The point of Valla's criticism is that Boethius fallaciously changes the reference of the subject term. *RDP*, pp. 226-227.

*'homo grammaticus non est'*. If the former is said of Donatus it is true; if the latter is said of Cato is true.<sup>6</sup> Valla first points out that on this reasoning the same substitutions could be made in reverse to show that both subcontraries can be false (226). He shows that Boethius's procedure here is inconsistent with his own remarks a few sentences later on the need to prevent the reference of terms in pairs of contraries from being altered through ambiguity or temporal difference (227-229). He attacks the whole idea of isolating such statements by pointing out that in any real context the referent of *homo* in the sentence would be clear in advance (226).

The point here is that if the reference of the subject is allowed to change there is no question of any contrariness or contradiction. It is not a contradiction to say that some horses are white and others are brown. Nor is it a contradiction to say 'Plato sits' and 'Plato does not sit', referring to different moments. Valla insists on this because he considers that there is a value in making it clear that 'Plato lives' or 'these men read' is contrary to 'Plato does not live' or 'these men do not read', that is, that only one sentence of each of these pairs can be true of the same subject at a given time (228-230). He has already accounted for the case in which some elephants are wild and some are not with his third kind at the level of universal quantity. His insistence that the reference of the subject of a proposition remain constant does not contradict his earlier position that true particulars have an element of vagueness in their reference. 'Some horse' can be any horse, but for Valla it cannot be one horse at one instant and another at the next.<sup>7</sup>

When he considers contradictories, Valla notes that one must be true, the other false. He reminds the reader that propositions involving true particulars (i.e. those involving *signa* like: *aliquis*, *quispiam*, *quisquam*) which are opposed to each other will be contradictories, not subcontraries, since when a true particular is negated, it yields a universal negative (230-231). Then he quotes Boethius's explanation of the significance of subcontraries in relation to contraries.

If the particular 'some (*quidam*) man is just' is false, the universal 'every man is just' will also be false. For if 'some man is just' is false, it will be true that no man is just. Therefore if the particular is false, the universal will be false.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> *PL* 64, 803A.

<sup>7</sup> Because of this problem Valla suggests that the subcontrary really only applies to pronouns and proper names. *RDP*, p 230.

<sup>8</sup> *RDP*, p. 232: 'Si particularis 'quidam homo iustus est' falsa fuerit, universalis etiam

In this proof, which is based on the contradictory, Valla substitutes Catiline for the first *quidam* ('Catiline is just' is false) to conclude that no man is just, which means that neither Cicero nor Cato is just, which he finds absurd (232-233).

Valla's argument here depends on his interpretation of *quidam*. He interprets *quidam* to mean 'a certain one', whereas if it meant 'some', in the way Boethius himself takes it, Valla would not be free to write in the name of his choice. He concedes that if Boethius had written *aliquis* for *quidam*, his comment would be valid (233).<sup>9</sup> So Valla's argument that Boethius here contradicts himself depends on interpreting Boethius's use of *quidam* in a way which he knew was opposed to Boethius's understanding of the term. One might, I suppose, defend Valla by saying that his interpretation of the word is better classical Latin.<sup>10</sup> Valla is more justified when he adds that the reliance of the universal on the particular is overstated. To him the particular is not a cause but only an indicator in relation to the universal. To say "some man is just" is false' is a statement about universals: 'no man is just'. 'No man is just' is not an accumulation of the results of particular cases. It is a universal assertion. If the universal case can be determined to be true or false, it governs the other cases. If it is true, both its contrary and its contradictory are false. If it is not universally true, there is still the possibility of partial truth. In that case singulars can be useful in making a judgement (235).

Some of Valla's criticism touches only points of detail in Boethius's exposition, some of it depends on exploiting Boethius's use of *quidam*, which Valla has shown to indicate singularity rather than particularity. Evidently part of his object was to produce a devastating rebuttal of an established Aristotelian doctrine. Taken as a whole however, Valla's account does expose flaws in the square of contraries, particularly in the relationships (actual and implied) between the particular and the universal.

---

'omnis homo iustus est' falsa erit. Nam si 'quidam homo iustus est' falsa fuerit, vera erit 'nullus homo iustus est'; falsa igitur particularis, falsa erit universalis.' This quotation differs from its source (PL 64, 801C) in omitting the initial 'nam' and the penultimate sentence 'si vera est nullus homo iustus est, falsa est omnis homo iustus est.' But presumably Valla takes this move as implied.

<sup>9</sup> The fact that *quidam* can be replaced by a singular is damaging to it. Equally it matters that the reference of a term should not be altered arbitrarily to produce a desired result. The validity of the square of contraries is to some extent dependent on the way it is applied to a particular case.

<sup>10</sup> Or it could be pointed out that the substitution Valla makes here is exactly like the ones Boethius made (and Valla derided) in the discussion of subcontraries cited above. In the earlier version Valla had made a similar substitution, taking *quidam elephas* as a certain elephant in order to attack Boethius's view of subcontraries. *RDP*, pp. 482-483.

Furthermore I think it could be argued that Valla's exposition of contrary statements (a three-valued solution at the level of universals, and a recognition that only one of a pair of contradictories and, where the subject is firmly designated, only one subcontrary can be true) is clearer and less open to misinterpretation than the square of contraries.

*Proof and Argument.*

Valla's account of proof and argument is centred on Quintilian's version of the topics of invention, which he quotes entire. His own views appear in the central section of his chapter on the modal propositions, after his reduction of the Aristotelian doctrine of the six kinds of modal proposition (237-238) and before his outline of the rhetorical theory of status<sup>11</sup> (243-244). Valla's argument sets out from the reduced version of the modals.

It is consequently my view that the modal proposition is of no use (and I think that the other nouns and verbs which I have listed have just as much weight as those six), except that necessity and possibility are useful in the conclusion, just as truth is in all parts of the argumentation. Everything ought to be true, whether you say 'it is necessary', or 'possible', or 'easy', or 'honourable', or any of the others. In this context 'true' is the same as 'certain', for here it is no advantage for something to be true unless it is certain and agreed.<sup>12</sup>

In the case of the syllogism, when two propositions are put forward as true, certain and agreed, the truth of the third is then forced with a sort of necessity (239). He gives the following example:

It is honourable for every citizen to fight for his country,  
Cato is a Roman citizen,  
Therefore he ought to fight for Rome which is his country,  
Or, therefore Cato should necessarily fight honourably for his country.(239)

It is unfortunate that this example is both ill-formed as a syllogism, in that the predicate of the conclusion differs from the predicate of the first

<sup>11</sup> Modal propositions are propositions which are modified by a clause which introduces them, e.g. 'It is possible that...'. Aristotle identified four types, but the tradition increased them to six (possible, impossible, necessary, contingent, true, false) *De interpretatione*, 21a34-23a27.<sup>12</sup> For status theory, *De inventione*, 1.8.10-13.18, *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, 1.10.18-15.25, *Institutio oratoria*, 3.6, 7.2-10.

<sup>12</sup> *RDP*, p. 239: 'Quapropter ita sentio, nihil esse enuntiationem modalem tantundemque momenti, quantum illa sex habent, habere cetera quae dixi nomina seu verba, sed necessitatem ac possibilitem in conclusione esse, sicut veritatem in omnibus partibus argumentationis. Omnia enim sint vera oportet, sive dicas 'necessae est' sive 'possible' sive 'facile' sive 'honestum', sive cetera omnia. Idem autem est hoc loco 'verum' quod 'certum', quia nihil attinet esse quid verum, nisi fuerit certum atque confessum.'

premiss, and invalid in that it contains a premiss which cannot be treated as certain. One can show this by drawing attention to the presence in the premiss of a word (honourable) usually associated with probable arguments, and by counter instances (Is it honourable for the old and infirm to fight? Must the ruler fight in person?). But Valla states that his premiss is true, certain and acknowledged by all.<sup>13</sup> The use of a form which is not strictly syllogistic may be intentional, as an anticipation of his arguments in book three against strict syllogistic form. Nevertheless Valla's conditions for a necessary conclusion seem clear: a tightly constructed argument and assumed propositions which are certain and agreed.

Whenever the reason is not evidently true and evidently certain, but is only half true and half certain, then the conclusion is not necessary but semi-necessary. This when it has considerable force is called plausible (*verisimilis*) or credible, that is, very possible, when it has little force it is called possible, that is somewhat likely and credible.<sup>14</sup>

While discussing some *signa* for likely but not certain propositions (*plerusque, saepe, nonnunquam*), Valla provides this example:

A mother loves her son (this is highly probable, but not certain),  
 Orestes is Clytemnestra's son,  
 Therefore it is probable or credible, or at least possible, that Clytemnestra loves Orestes. (239-240)

In these examples it is clear that probability occurs in the conclusion in place of certainty whenever, and because, lack of certainty is present in one of the propositions. This is the meaning of the formulation above: the reason which is not evidently true and certain. Valla makes no allusion here to the view of Aristotle's followers that mere probability may be a consequence of the form of argumentation employed, since in the scheme of his book he has not yet reached the forms of argumentation.

He offers two summaries of his opinion.

Therefore not without reason the greatest authors, including Cicero and Quintilian, have made two parts or kinds of proof: some are necessary, others are not contradictory, or credible. The first kind belongs to the logician, both kinds to the orator. The first lacks comparison, the second

---

<sup>13</sup> *RDP*, p. 239: 'honestum est quemlibet civem pugnare pro patria': hoc verum certumque est, quod omnes confitentur.'

<sup>14</sup> *RDP*, p. 239: 'At quotiens ratio non plane vera planeque certa, sed semivera ac semicerta est, tum conclusio non est necessaria, sed seminecessaria: quae cum multum habuerit virium vocabitur 'verisimilis' sive 'credibilis', hoc est valde possibilis, cum paulum vocabitur 'possibilis', idest aliquantum verisimilis atque credibilis.'

does not.<sup>15</sup>

All proof arises through true things which are certain and through these things truth itself makes some other thing which was previously uncertain appear certain, and it does this either necessarily or plausibly.<sup>16</sup>

Valla seems to hold the following views: (1) What you say in making a proof ought to be true; (2) Proof is the process by which some true statement which was doubted is made to appear certain as a result of the adducing of other propositions which are agreed as well as true; (3) Proof may be necessary (as when propositions which are certain and agreed are arranged to force agreement) or likely (when one of the premisses is only probable).

The difficulty here arises from the appearance of three different terms which may be thought to overlap to some extent: true, agreed and necessary. It seems that the role of 'true' in this argument is largely moral. Everything you say in an argument should be 'true' in the sense that it should reflect what you actually think. Whether it is 'true' in Valla's other sense will depend on God's gift of true perception and understanding (19-20). By insisting that everything in the argument should be true, Valla is presumably avoiding the charge that rhetoric and dialectic are immoral because they can teach you how to deceive. 'Agreed' has a practical role. You will not succeed in an argument unless the person you are trying to persuade (opponent or audience)<sup>17</sup> agrees with your premisses. 'Necessary' is applied to the conclusion. It is a marker, to be contrasted with 'plausible' or 'probable'. If either of the premisses (to follow Valla in speaking in a syllogistic way here) is not certain and agreed but only likely, the conclusion is probable. If both premisses are certain and agreed, the conclusion is necessary. I take it that part of making any argument 'true' consists in marking those things that are only probable,<sup>18</sup> and that equally

<sup>15</sup> *RDP*, p. 241: 'Ideoque non immerito maximi auctores, quorum sunt Cicero et Quintilianus, duas tantum partes fecerunt sive species probationum, ut aliae sunt 'necessariae', aliae 'non repugnantes' sive 'credibiles': quarum prior ad logicos, utraque ad oratores pertinet, illa caret comparatione, haec non caret.' Although Valla restricts logicians to arguments which are necessary, presumably dialecticians as well as orators study both, since he goes on to discuss plausible arguments. But compare Camporeale, *Lorenzo Valla: umanesimo*, pp. 41-42.

<sup>16</sup> *RDP*, p. 243: 'Probatio omnis fit per vera quae certa sunt, facitque per haec ipsa veritas aliud quoddam verum videri certum quod erat incertum, idque vel necessario, vel verisimiliter.'

<sup>17</sup> Valla does not actually say who it is that has to agree, but this seems a reasonable assumption.

<sup>18</sup> Valla notes that while 'a mother loves her son' is only half true since not all mothers love their sons, the addition of the non universal sign 'most' (*plerusque*) renders the

there are some propositions which will only be agreed by audience or opponent if their probabilism is marked.

There is no statement in this passage which will allow the inference that truth, certainty or necessity are hard to attain, rarely found, or of little interest. Indeed if I am right about the way 'true' is used, arguing on both sides would appear to be excluded. But Valla also speaks of arguing 'almost in the sceptical manner', though this may refer to his arguments with authorities rather than to arguing on both sides.<sup>19</sup>

Valla's views in this section are in harmony with those of Quintilian in the chapters which Valla borrows. Quintilian too argues that something which does not need to be proved must be brought in to prove something which is in doubt, distinguishes certain from likely proof and classifies different degrees of probability.<sup>20</sup>

In his examples of certainty and likelihood Valla used syllogisms (or quasi-syllogisms) to make his point. In preparing for the topics, he makes, following Boethius, a strong distinction between argument and argumentation.

I imagine that I shall now be expected to discuss the nature of the syllogism and every other kind of argumentation. But it would be more convenient to begin by making known the arguments from which we construct argumentations. On this subject, since I can think of nothing new to say, I shall of course be content with the precepts of Quintilian.<sup>21</sup>

Syllogism, induction and the other forms of argumentation are ways of setting out arguments. The arguments, whether necessary or probable, are the primary elements of persuasion. They are derived from the indications, from the special topics of person and thing, and from the general topics (that is, from what Quintilian sets out in *Institutio oratoria*, V.10). Valla makes the invented arguments more separable from the forms of argumentation than orthodox Aristotelians do. For him the form comes second; it is a matter of presentation and effect. For them the process of invention provides suggestions which are effective only when they are set out in one of the approved forms. In *Prior Analytics* the validity of the

---

proposition true and certain, *RDP*, pp. 239-240.

<sup>19</sup> These issues are discussed in chapter 5 below.

<sup>20</sup> *Institutio oratoria*, 5.10.11-17, *RDP*, pp. 252-3.

<sup>21</sup> *RDP*, p. 244: 'Credo iam expectari ut qualis esse syllogismus debeat atque omnis argumentatio, disseramus. Verum id fieri multo commodius, si prius quae sint argumenta unde conficiuntur argumentationes, cognoscamus. De qua re, cum nihil ego novi excogitare possim, ero nimis praeceptis Quintiliani contentus.'

argument was guaranteed by the form in which it was set out.<sup>22</sup> If you could get two true premisses in the pattern of one of the valid forms then you were entitled to draw the appropriate conclusion. When Valla puts the argumentative weight on the topics and on the force of the words employed, treating the syllogism as merely one form of presentation among many, he has moved a long way from the Aristotelian position.

Like other instructions on how to use the topics, Quintilian's remarks are not really full enough to instruct the uninitiated.<sup>23</sup> He particularly emphasizes that one should not use the topics in a mechanical fashion but that one should rather look into the circumstances of each particular case.<sup>24</sup> This point is driven home by the way he works out his example, the declamation theme of the Theban talents.<sup>25</sup>

The chapters from Quintilian taken as a whole contribute to a view of argument as something that is created and used. This is not foreign to the dialectical tradition, any more than constructing likely arguments is, but it makes a strong contrast to the more analytical approach found in *Prior Analytics* and in certain sections of the manuals. Quintilian's insistence on actual (or possible) cases and real language also contrasts with the more formal approach of the Aristotelians.

### *Forms of Argumentation*

Valla views argumentation as a technique of expression, a way of giving appropriate form to an argument. One way he shows this is by converting an argument found in one form to another (as when he reformulates an example of induction taken from Quintilian as a syllogism) (348). In his positive teaching he stresses the range of possible forms of argumentation. In place of the dominance of the syllogism taken strictly, he describes alongside it various deviant kinds of syllogism,<sup>26</sup> hypothetical syllogism,

<sup>22</sup> Aristotle ensured that his treatment would concentrate on the formal properties of the argument by substituting letters for the terms of the propositions. From all possible combinations of three propositions (each of which involves two of the same three terms) and four types, he isolates those in which a valid conclusion can be drawn, if the premisses are valid. He shows that all the valid forms can be reduced to the universal syllogisms of the first figure and deduces a few general rules which govern the whole system. Among these is the important observation that in every valid syllogism one of the premisses must be affirmative and one must be universal. *Prior Analytics*, 25a1-25, 26b34-27a14, 41b5-10, *Tractatus*, pp. 44-51. Modern assessments: J. Barnes, *Aristotle* (Oxford, 1982), p. 31, E. J. Lemmon, *Beginning Logic* (London, 1965), p. 174.

<sup>23</sup> *Institutio oratoria*, 5.10.20-22, *RDP*, p. 254.

<sup>24</sup> *Institutio oratoria*, 5.10.100-108, 119, *RDP*, p. 274.

<sup>25</sup> *Institutio oratoria*, 5.10.109-118.

<sup>26</sup> See the examples below. The all negative syllogism ('Whatever is not an animal is not

dilemma, chains of syllogisms, sorites, induction, epicheireme, example and enthymeme. In treating all these Valla insists that it is not obligatory to follow the form given exactly; it may be advantageous to add to one element and to suppress another.<sup>27</sup> In other words the force of an argument is not derived from its form; the forms of argumentation are skeletons to be worked over in the process of writing, they need not be reproduced exactly. The difficulty here, as we have seen with one of Valla's examples, is that certain kinds of variation can weaken an argument.

Valla gives examples of each form of argumentation, sometimes discussing their force and weaknesses at length. His discussion emphasizes the criterion of usefulness. He attacks some of Aristotle's types of syllogism on the ground that their conclusions are useless (291-4, 297-300). In some of his chapters, the section on dilemma and conversion (discussed in more detail in the next chapter) would be an example, his positive presentation of the doctrine is completely overwhelmed by the quotation and criticism of positions he disagrees with (312-328).

The main object of his attack is Aristotle's elevation of the syllogism as the formal guarantor of correct reasoning. In Valla's view the syllogism is an outward formulation of an argument, not argument itself. He makes it one form among many. He rejects many of Aristotle's model syllogisms and includes others he could not approve of (289-91), such as the following:

1. The universal sign is added to the predicate in the major proposition.

I love all my fellow countrymen.

You are my fellow countryman.

Therefore I love you. (536, 289)

2. All the terms are singular.

I leave my money to my only nephew.

This man is my only nephew.

Therefore I leave my money to this man. (289-290)

3. Syllogisms from whole and parts.

The whole of Campania is in Italy.

The whole of Italy is in Europe.

Therefore the whole of Campania is in Europe. (290)<sup>28</sup>

---

a man. Nothing that is insensible is an animal. Therefore nothing insensible is a man' (550, 302)) and all singular syllogism (example 2 below) which Valla devised deliberately flout Aristotle's rules for constructing syllogisms, *Prior Analytics*, 41b6-10, Peter of Spain, *Tractatus*, p. 45.

<sup>27</sup> *RDP*, pp. 282-286, 304-306.

<sup>28</sup> In the first version Valla provides examples of syllogisms in whole and part to

## 4. A syllogism with a singular description.

Plato does not have ape-like nostrils, a bald head and short stature.

This man has these features.

Therefore this man is not Plato. (542)

## 5. Moods in which the proposition is attributed to a speaker and denied.

You say that every Ethiopian is black.

This man is a white Ethiopian.

Therefore not every Ethiopian is black.

Therefore your statement is false. (544)

It is not easy to see why Valla regards this fifth form as a syllogism, though perhaps it assists his aim of blurring the distinction between syllogism and hypothetical syllogism. Perhaps it also exemplifies a further point in his attack on the syllogism, when he asserts that in many cases the form does not need to be set out in full.

Valla also discusses and gives examples of forms of argumentation which the Aristotelian tradition did not take up, in order to emphasize the range of forms available. These forms include hypothetical syllogism (e.g. 'if it is day, then it is light'), extended syllogism ('I rule my mother, my mother rules Themistocles, Themistocles rules the Athenian people, therefore I rule the Athenian people'), argument by question and answer (like the Socratic form of induction) sorites (see chapter 5 below) and dilemma (300-328).

Valla also draws attention to the argumentative force of the words employed. In some cases a range of conclusions can be drawn from a single proposition. Equally he shows that lack of attention to words can lead to false conclusions. For example, some words will not support extended syllogisms. It does not follow that because your house is the most beautiful house in the most beautiful section of Rome, the most beautiful of cities, it is the most beautiful house in the world (307). Valla shows that natural language use has an argumentative force which is not to be constrained or accounted for by imposed forms of word arrangement.

Valla's second purpose is to attack Boethius's scheme of four forms of proof, two main kinds, which are seen as opposite (syllogism, moving from general to particular, and induction, working in the reverse direction from particular to general) and two imperfect forms based on the main kinds

---

correspond with all the moods of the first two figures. In the later versions he outlines fewer deviant forms, thinking that those he has included make his point. *RDP*, p. 297 (cf. pp. 542-546).

(enthymeme, based on syllogism, and example, based on induction).<sup>29</sup> Valla first rejects the symmetry between syllogism and induction, by insisting that induction is not a collection of particular statements which can be put together in order to conclude with a general statement, but a technique of questioning designed to elicit specific concessions.<sup>30</sup> Then, following Quintilian, he introduces epicheireme as a syllogism with premisses which are merely probable. Finally, picking up from Aristotle's followers the definition of enthymeme as an incomplete argumentation, he concludes that there are enthymemes of induction and epicheireme alongside the enthymemes of syllogism (352-355). Example remains, stripped of its connection with induction, as a useful technique of argument, discussed in another chapter borrowed from Quintilian (334-345).

While developing this argument against the scheme of four types of proof, Valla points out several small mistakes in the Aristotelian tradition. He attacks Boethius's definition of induction ('Induction is a form of argument by which there is a progress from particulars to universals'),<sup>31</sup> because it omits three things which are required: apposition of similars, interrogation and proof. He attacks Boethius's example of induction (since skill is preferred to chance in steering ships, in driving chariots, and in governing peoples, it follows that skill is preferable to chance in every kind of administration) by adducing counter examples in which chance plays a role in government (choosing the kings of the Medes and the Persians, Roman punishments), and then rewrites it in his approved form (345-348). Aristotle's definition of the syllogism ('Syllogism is discourse in which once something has been conceded, something other than what was

---

<sup>29</sup> Boethius's scheme is quoted, *RDP*, pp. 352-353, 595. Peter of Spain's example of induction ('Socrates runs, Plato runs, Cicero runs, therefore every man runs', *Tractatus*, p. 56) gives an idea of what Valla was arguing against. In Aristotle an enthymeme was a syllogism in which one of the premisses is not established, but for medieval authors the enthymeme is marked by the absence of one premiss. Thus 'Every animal runs, so man runs' is an enthymeme, by virtue of omitting 'Every man is an animal'. Example is a form of argumentation in which what is said of one member of a species is transferred to another member of the species without it first being stated of the whole species. So 'Plato distrusts rhetoric, therefore Plotinus distrusts rhetoric' would be an instance of example. The parallel general statement ('All Platonic philosophers distrust rhetoric'), which would need to be established by induction, is left unsaid. In enthymeme and example supplying the missing proposition would convert the imperfect form into its corresponding perfect form.

<sup>30</sup> *De inventione*, I.31.51, *RDP*, p. 345.

<sup>31</sup> *RDP*, p. 346: 'Inductio est oratio per quam fit a particularibus ad universalia progressio.' *PL* 64, 1183C-D.

conceded necessarily follows')<sup>32</sup> is rejected as being too vague (280). Boethius's error in suggesting that Aristotle never discussed hypothetical syllogism is pointed out (300).

As well as criticizing Aristotle and his followers, Valla makes some attempt to go behind them to their predecessors, for example when he favours the Socratic method of induction and accuses Boethius of changing everything about it (like a thief cropping the hair and dyeing the coat of a horse, to disguise his capture) (346). In the same way his interest in dilemma and sorites seems to look back to the period before the Aristotelians dominated logic, when philosophers and rhetoricians used the same kinds of argument.<sup>33</sup>

Some of his reservations, for example his caution about sorites, fearing that it can be used to argue anything, reflect a concern to bring effective argument within limits. He can see the force of sorites and the usefulness of arguments from analogy but he does not want excessive claims to be made. All kinds of argumentation must remain subject to the ordinary scrutiny of word use and inference.

Valla's treatment of the following five topics from Aristotelian logic will be discussed more briefly: the *predicables*, *contrary words*, *modal propositions*, *sophisms* and *late scholastic logic*.

### *The *predicables**

The *predicables* are usually the subject of a separate treatise in the Aristotelian manuals. However there is no corresponding section in Valla's work. Instead the *predicables* appear in four places. He explains how the words 'species', 'genus', '*differentia*' and 'property' can be used in making definitions (169-171). The *predicables* are named as attributes of words in his chapter on qualities perceived by the senses together. They might formerly have been placed under the category of relatives, but in his system they are to be regarded as part of quality perceived by the mind (125-126). In his discussion of the tree of Porphyry he claims that genus and species are the same as whole and parts (48). Finally the *predicables* are mentioned among the topics, in the chapters borrowed from Quintilian

---

<sup>32</sup> *RDP*, p. 280: 'Syllogismus est oratio in qua, concessis quibusdam, aliud quid quam quae concessa sunt, per ea quae concessa sunt, necessario conficitur.' *Prior Analytics*, 24b18-22.

<sup>33</sup> For the present day interest in these arguments see the articles by J. Barnes and M. Burnyeat in J. Barnes et al. ed., *Science and Speculation* (Cambridge, 1982), pp. 24-68, 193-238.

(260-261).

It would seem that while he recognises that the *predicables* are words he cannot do without, in definition and classification, Valla tries to reduce their importance. When *genus* and *species* are explained separately, attention is inevitably drawn to problems about *universals* and the *reality* behind the hierarchical organisation of *substance*. By suggesting that the *predicables* are things one might say about words (and that therefore they have a place within a category) he reduces the need for such metaphysical speculation (125-126).

### *Contrary Words*

Contrary words appear among the post-predicaments (the section of *Categories* which comes after the categories proper) in Aristotelian manuals. There are four kinds of opposition between single words: contraries (black - white), relations (father - son), privation (sighted - blind), and affirmative and negative (good - not good). Valla devotes a chapter of book two to reducing them. He denies that relations are opposed, regarding them as cognates. He treats contraries and privation as equivalent ('bad is the privation of good') and argues that in most cases, though not in all, affirmative and negative belongs to the same type as contraries (e.g. 'sober is equivalent to not drunk, so both sober and not drunk are contrary to drunk') (235-236). He had earlier attacked the concept of privation in his chapter on action (128-130).

In book one Valla discusses the mean between contraries. He first suggests that a medium will tend to participate in both contraries (e.g. grey is the medium between black and white, blue is not). He then opposes the doctrine, which he attributes to Aristotle, that the negative is more opposed than the contrary, arguing instead that the negative can be a medium (e.g. not bad as a medium between good and bad) (161-163). These positions are hard to reconcile among themselves, and with the idea of making the contrary equivalent to the negative.

In chapter twelve of book two, which he devotes to the subject, Valla denies as a matter of principle that there is any difference between 'he is not just' and 'he is unjust'. He extends this to analogous cases (e.g. immodest, not modest; illiterate, not literate) (219-222). These positions can just about be reconciled by the formula that in most cases negation equals contrariety. Valla wants to undermine Aristotle's ethical use of the medium between contraries (Valla insists that good is contrary to bad), but he risks impoverishing thought by eliminating the often useful distinction

between negation and contrariety.

### *Modal Propositions*

Aristotle devoted a good deal of *De interpretatione* and *Prior Analytics* to extending to modal propositions the schemes he had produced for categorical propositions. This adaptation depends on his having traced relations of equivalence and opposition between 'possible', 'impossible', 'necessary' and 'contingent' (his followers added 'true' and 'false').

Valla treats this doctrine in a very cavalier fashion. At first he argues that the modal propositions do not need to be so numerous. He reduces them to possible, impossible ('impossible...not' is equivalent to 'necessary') and true. Then he takes the opposite tack arguing that by concentrating on these six, logic deprives itself of the use of other valuable modal terms: easy, difficult, certain, customary, useful, honourable and so on (237-238). From this he makes a transition to talking of the means of proof, through necessity or probability.

In this chapter the doctrine of the modals seems to offer a pretext for attacking Aristotle, both by reducing one of his numerical groups and and by accusing him of ignoring the richness of language. It is also important for making the transition towards the means of proof, through the shared word 'necessary'.

### *Sophisms*

Deceptive reasoning was the subject of Aristotle's *Sophistical Refutations*. The problems he discussed there were the chief sources of several aspects of medieval logic.<sup>34</sup> Valla offers no rules for dealing with fallacies. In the first version of his chapter on the importance of considering the weight of words carefully, he explains that while he regards most of the contents of *Sophistical Refutations* as childish, he also thinks that the project of a comprehensive list of errors to avoid is unattainable. He quotes *Rhetorica ad Herennium* to the same effect, discusses an argument from Boethius which he regards as faulty, and concludes that what is required is a thorough knowledge of the meaning and usage of words obtained from careful reading of the best authors (575-576).

In the second version he introduces the topic more briefly but offers common-sense answers to some particular fallacies. The Ethiopian's white teeth do not mean that it is wrong to call him 'black', any more than we

---

<sup>34</sup> Aristotle describes and gives examples of 13 types of deceptive argument.

ought to call him 'red' on account of his tongue. People are called 'black' or 'white' according to skin colour (328). This sophism was among the fallacies of composition and division discussed by Aristotle and Peter of Spain.<sup>35</sup> When someone says 'if you have seen every bird, you have seen this bird' (pulling a pigeon out of a hat), it is evident that in the first clause, the intended meaning is 'kinds of bird', not 'individual birds' (329). This is similar to the sophism 'every animal was in Noah's ark', discussed by Peter of Spain and Heytesbury.<sup>36</sup>

While I speak according to the established custom of the learned I cannot be reproved. If you attack me with fallacies, I shall appeal to the laws and customs of speech, as if to the laws of the land...In order to avoid fallacies we ought to investigate and examine carefully the significance of words.<sup>37</sup>

As an example he contrasts the meaning of 'city' in 'the enemy entered the city' and 'the enemy took the city'. The enemy enters the city when it enters any part of it, but it takes the city only when it captures all (or almost all) of it. If anyone errs by departing from ordinary usage we should correct them by returning to it (329). It is hard not to agree that an appreciation of the context in which something is said, and an understanding of the way language and context operate, will often enable the fallacies to be avoided or disentangled.

In the chapter on dilemma and conversion, Valla confronted a fallacy from Lactantius similar to the type that medieval logicians termed 'the liar', and placed among the insolubles.<sup>38</sup> Someone had dreamed that he ought not to believe dreams. Should he believe the dream and therefore not believe dreams, or not believe it and therefore believe dreams? Valla first explains that this is not the sort of dream which one has to believe or not believe since it does not assert anything that can be verified in the world (as would, for example, a dream about the location of buried treasure). He adds that if one does not believe dreams, one will have reached this belief on wider grounds than simply having dreamed this dream, and that continuing in the belief will not be a case of believing a dream. Someone who believes in dreams will not be obliged to reverse that belief because of this one dream,

<sup>35</sup> *Sophistical Refutations*, 167a10-14, Peter of Spain, *Tractatus*, p. 159.

<sup>36</sup> *Tractatus*, pp. 204-205, C. Wilson, *William of Heytesbury* (Madison, 1960), p. 161.

<sup>37</sup> *RDP*, p. 329: 'Dum ego ad consuetudinem eruditorum loquar, reprehendi non possum: quem si tu captionibus adorieris, leges loquendi ac mores, tanquam iura quaedam civilia, appellabo... Verum ut captionibus obviam ire, ita subtiliter inquirere et verborum pondera examinare debemus.'

<sup>38</sup> P. V. Spade, 'Insolubilia', *CHLMP*, pp. 246-253.

which has no persuasive weight because of the element of self contradiction (314-316). In this instance Valla has used the (idea of a) context of the statement more to evade the logical problems than to solve them. He might legitimately complain that the example is artificial.

Valla does not provide solutions for all the classic fallacies but he does enough to show that his policy of attending to the meaning of words and not allowing meanings to be altered arbitrarily is effective in resolving many of them. He had followed very similar principles when he advised that in constructing chains of syllogisms one should make sure that the meanings of the particular words involved would support the extension of inference (307).

### *Late Scholastic Logic*

Valla makes very few references to late scholastic logic. In his letter to Serra he lists some recent logicians (Albert of Saxony, Albertus Magnus, Strode, Ockham, Paul of Venice) among the authors he has attacked.<sup>39</sup> In the prefaces to books two and three he speaks of recent logicians' use of fallacious and deceptive arguments, and of their teaching others to use such arguments in disputation (175, 277). The fallacies he attempts to resolve are the same as or similar to some that they worked on, so his comments could be regarded as addressed to them.

In his chapter on the weight of words he denigrates those who think '*possibile est sedentem currere*' differs from '*sedentem possibile est currere*'.<sup>40</sup> He treats the attempt to make any distinction between them as a failure to understand the nature of the Latin language. The sentences he quotes clearly refer, perhaps via Paul of Venice, to rules for the solution of fallacies of composition and division, like Heytesbury's.<sup>41</sup> Valla makes another contemptuous reference to this aspect of composition and division in the first version of his chapter on modal propositions (492).

There are two passages earlier in the book which discuss the same

---

<sup>39</sup> *Epistolae*, pp. 200-201.

<sup>40</sup> *RDP*, pp. 331-32. More mocks several similar examples, 'Letter to Dorp', *The Complete Works of St Thomas More*, XV, ed. D. Kinney (New Haven, 1986), pp. 28-34. I owe this reference to Professor J. B. Trapp.

<sup>41</sup> Heytesbury lists eight kinds of proposition in which the fallacy of composed and divided sense ('Five is two and three, therefore five is two, and five is three') occurs and provides rules for disentangling the senses. W. Heytesbury, *Tractatus de senso composito et diviso*, *Regulæ eiusdem cum sophismatibus...* (Venice, 1494), C. Wilson, *William of Heytesbury*, A. Maierù, 'Il *Tractatus de sensu compositu et diviso* di Guglielmo Heytesbury', *Rivista critica di storia della filosofia*, 21 (1966), pp. 243-263. Zippel refers to Paul of Venice, *Logica Magna* (Venice, 1499), 122<sup>v</sup>-124<sup>v</sup>.

problems as supposition theory, though they account for them differently. In his discussion of audible quality Valla drew attention to the special meaning of *res* in 'res is a word' (123). The scholastics called this 'material supposition'. In his discussion of the indefinite, one of the ways in which the unmarked common term (e.g. animal, man) could operate was 'totally', as in 'man is a species of animal' and 'animal is a genus'. This they called 'simple supposition' (188). When Valla is explaining that each language has its own rules and customs, he rejects the idea of a universal grammar 'which certain charlatans are making, for instance those who write on *modi significandi*'.<sup>42</sup> Valla mentions the authors on *modi significandi* along with the metaphysicians whom he wants to expel from theology, in his *Encomium S. Thomae*. Ampliation, composition and division are also among the terms he rejects there.<sup>43</sup>

A different sort of problem is posed by the relationship between Valla and Ockham. Ockham is among the medieval authors condemned in the letter to Serra,<sup>44</sup> but there are several places in the dialectic in which Valla makes similar points to Ockham's: attacking one as a transcendental (18), the abstract and concrete sense (21), and the notion of privation (114), making the category 'relation' a part of quality (135), reducing quantity to quality (141), equating action and passion (154), and rejecting the additional five moods of the first figure of the syllogism (291).<sup>45</sup> The easiest way to explain these similarities is through similarity of purpose. Both Ockham and Valla were concerned to simplify Aristotle's logic and metaphysics wherever possible. Valla claims to have read Ockham. Might Ockham therefore be a source for Valla? One can think of reasons why Valla would not have used details from Ockham, chief among them the embarrassment of being found out copying ideas from the barbarians whose language and thought he affected to despise. It must nevertheless be

<sup>42</sup> *RDP*, p. 217: 'Nec magis de grammatica reddi ratio potest (quod quidam nugatores faciunt, ut ii qui de modis significandi scribunt) quam cur aliis vocibus aliae nationes utantur.' On supposition see n. 2 above, on *modi significandi*: J. Pinborg, 'Speculative Grammar', *CHLMP*, pp. 254-269, *Die Entwicklung der Sprachtheorie im Mittelalter* (Munster, 1967), G. L. Bursill-Hall, *Speculative Grammars of the Middle Ages* (The Hague, 1971); Thomas of Erfurt, *Grammatica Speculativa*, ed. G. L. Bursill-Hall (London, 1972), R. W. Hunt, *The History of Grammar in the Middle Ages: Collected Papers* (Amsterdam, 1980), K. M. Fredborg, 'Speculative Grammar', in P. Dronke ed., *A History of Twelfth-Century Western Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 177-195.

<sup>43</sup> *Opera omnia*, II, p. 350: 'neque modorum significandi nugas in quaestionibus sacris admiscendas putaverunt.'

<sup>44</sup> *Epidiastae*, p. 201.

<sup>45</sup> The references to Ockham in each case are set out in Zippel's notes, to which I am indebted here as elsewhere.

counted at least possible that Ockham was a source, as perhaps Albertus Magnus also was, in the attack on the tree of Porphyry (47-49).

*Conclusion: Logic and Language*

In his second and third books, Valla attacks many of the staples of Aristotelian logic: the form of the proposition, the square of contraries, the four kinds of opposition of single words, modal propositions, the third and fourth figures of the syllogism, the primacy of the syllogism, the four forms of argumentation and the sophisms. Accompanying these broad attacks are attempted refutations of a very large number of points of detail. Valla denies as many of Aristotle's numerical schemes (4 oppositions, square of contraries, 6 modals, 6 types of motion, 10 categories, etc.) as possible. Not all his criticisms are justified and some of them are unfair (for example the way he uses his version of the meaning of *quidam* to make Boethius's use of it, in a different sense, lead to absurd consequences), but it is much harder to accuse him of lack of understanding in his logical doctrine than in his metaphysics.

The main positive theme of Valla's reform of logic is his wish to make logic conform with real language. This is evident in his preference for the verbal form over the copula with predicate, in his analysis of the usual (as opposed to imposed) meanings of the quantifiers and the negatives, in his rejection of Aristotle's so called infinite form (*non-homo*), which Valla regards as an abuse of language, in his emphasis on writers' variation of strict syllogistic form and in his insistence that arguers look carefully at the established meanings of the words they are using. His comments frequently emphasize the need for recourse to the customary forms and meanings of language. In his chapter on the folly of using negation badly, Valla rejects the use of expressions like '*non est non iustus non Socrates*'.

Is there such a shortage of material for nonsense elsewhere that you deceitful jesters want to find it in what you brag about as the science of truth (I say 'brag' because every science inquires about truth)?

We ought certainly to speak according to the rules of the grammar, but good Latin is even more important than good grammar. That is, we should speak not so much according to the rules of the art as according to the usage of the learned and stylish, which is the greatest art. For everyone knows that the most important part of speaking depends on usage and authority. Quintilian speaks of it like this.

'Customary usage is the most reliable guide to language. As with coins

we should evidently use those which are marked with the public stamp.<sup>46</sup>

Exasperated with Boethius's conclusions about subalterns, Valla explodes

Boethius -- if I am permitted to address someone dead and gone -- I cannot find here your learning or carefulness. Did you respect your master so much that you gave up following nature? Did you so ally yourself with the Greeks that you defected from the Latins and preferred the norms of a foreign language to have authority over us instead of our own? Consult the books of the ancients, enquire of public usage, take counsel with yourself and you will find that what you say differs from their judgement, and even from the judgement of your own ears.<sup>47</sup>

These outbursts, and there are many that could be quoted, merely reinforce the message that Valla gives most clearly in his chapter on attending to the weight of words. In order to avoid error it is necessary to acquire a thorough knowledge of the meanings and uses of words, from careful reading of the best authors. In the preface to book three of *Elegantiae*, Valla said that in his dialectic he had shown that the philosophers went wrong because they lacked the knowledge of language (*facultas loquendi*).<sup>48</sup>

<sup>46</sup> *RDP*, p. 217: 'Adeone deest alibi nugandi materia, ut in disciplina veritatis, sicuti iactatis (nam omnis disciplina de vero quaerit), mendacissimi ioculatores velitis inveniri?

Nobis quidem ad normam grammatices loquendum est, nec tam grammaticae quam latine loquendum: hoc est non tam ad praecepta artis, quam ad consuetudinem eruditorum atque elegantium, quae optima ars est. Nam quis nescit maximam loquendi partem auctoritate niti et consuetudine? De qua ita ait Quintilianus: 'Consuetudo certissima est loquendi magistra, utendumque plane sermone ut nummo cui publica forma est'. *Institutio oratoria*, 1.6.3.

<sup>47</sup> *RDP*, pp. 232-233: 'Boeti (ut absentem alloquar et mortuum), vehementer tuam vel eruditionem vel diligentiam desidero. Adeone ad magistrum respexisti, ut naturam sequi desineres? ita Graecos adscivisti, ut a Latinis descisceres et mores linguae alienae quam nostratis apud nos valere malles? Consule priscorum libros, publicam consuetudinem interroga, temetipsum in consilium adhibe, et compories istud quod loqueris ab illorum, immo a tuarum aurium iudicio discrepare.'

<sup>48</sup> *Opera Omnia*, I, p. 80: 'An philosophorum libri, qui ne a Gothis quidem, aut Vandilis intelligeretur? quos ego ob hoc maxime errare, quod loquendi facultate caruerunt, in libris meis *De dialectica* ostendo.'

## CHAPTER FIVE

### GRAMMAR, RHETORIC AND DIALECTIC IN *REPASTINATIO*

*Repastinatio dialecticae et philosophiae* aimed to provoke a reorientation of the *trivium*. Dialectic was to be displaced from its position as the most important of the three subjects, to which students were expected to devote most time. Valla also wanted to change the emphasis within dialectic teaching. Where the scholastics treated dialectic as a formalised, self-sufficient object of study, he stressed its obligation to work within the laws and practices of classical Latin. Validity in argument was to depend on knowing how words should be used rather than on argumentative formulae. By treating dialectic as the study of argument within natural language Valla drew the subjects of the *trivium* together, because he emphasized the connections between logic, usage and organisation. This drawing together of the arts of language is apparent in Valla's use within *Repastinatio* of arguments derived from grammar and rhetoric, as well as in his statements of intent. This chapter will discuss both Valla's comments on the relations among the subjects of the *trivium* and his use of grammar and rhetoric within his *Dialectic*, but I want to begin by looking at how Valla uses, and perhaps extends, arguments characteristic of dialectic (and of philosophy). It is important to appreciate that Valla does philosophy in a philosophical way as well as connecting dialectic with the other subjects of the *trivium*. Far from rhetoricizing philosophy or abolishing dialectic, Valla aims at co-operation among the language arts. For him rhetoric is pre-eminent, but dialectic is more widely useful, and grammar, by which he means a thorough knowledge of both ancient languages and their literatures, is fundamental.

#### *Argumentative Techniques*

*Repastinatio* employs many techniques and criteria characteristic of philosophical arguing. In his criticism of the tree of Porphyry, for example, Valla uses the example of the soul to show that Porphyry's (or more likely Boethius's) division of reality is internally inconsistent (47). He shows that the position which the tree assigns to God is inconsistent with Christianity (391). In attacking Aristotle's teaching concerning God and the soul he

cites portions of Aristotle's text to argue the same conclusion (54, 56, 59-64). By distinguishing between grammar and the categories he rejects Aristotle's argument that the property of not taking more and less defines substance (157). He employs a reduction to absurdity to attack Aristotle's definition of form and Boethius's rules for subcontraries (382, 167, 233). These are all types of argument and criteria of proof which any philosopher might use.

Valla often backs up his arguments with mockery and denunciation, for which one can find precedents in Plato, as one can also for his 'unfair' arguments.<sup>1</sup> Nor is Valla averse to arguments from authority, especially when that authority is Quintilian.<sup>2</sup> Like Aristotle Valla often reviews the deficiencies of previous opinions, using their failings or their residual strong points as a springboard for his own opinions.

There are other arguments in which Valla seems to stretch the limits of what is permissible in philosophical arguing. In the first version's introduction to the categories, discussed above, he almost argues by elimination.

Heat, brightness and flickering, which are three qualities of fire, are different from each other. If they differ among themselves, how much more do they differ from the state in which they inhere. If this is anything at all (as it certainly is), what can it be but substance? Therefore this substance will be a single thing, not a group.<sup>3</sup>

In this case, the argument begins with a comparison between three qualities and the 'state in which they inhere'. The thing which Valla is trying to define is thus assumed as the second term of his comparison. Then he suggests that this thing, whose existence he assumes again, can be nothing else except substance. This conclusion is then used as a pretext for a further assertion about the nature of the thing in which the qualities inhere. In logical terms the sequence of assertions is not acceptable. Nevertheless the way they are combined with the consideration of the example gives them a certain explanatory force. The passage at least reinforces the predisposition to believe in independently existing unities underlying the diversity of sense impressions. In another way perhaps the whole passage

<sup>1</sup> See the discussion of *signa* in chapter 4 above.

<sup>2</sup> He also uses the authority of two authors he often criticizes, Priscian and Ulpian to support basic propositions of his system. *RDP*, pp. 9-10, 15, 42, 136.

<sup>3</sup> *RDP*, p 365: 'Aliud enim est calor, aliud splendor, aliud vibratus quae sunt tres ignis qualitates: quae, si inter se differunt, quanto magis different a subiecto cui inhaerent, quod siquod est (ut certe est), quid nisi substantia erit? Ergo una res, non universa, haec sit substantia.'

depends on the way the Aristotelian rabbit (substance) is produced from the hat, returning us to the familiar when things are becoming difficult.

### *Sorites*

In choosing to discuss sorites Valla was extending his argument that the Aristotelian four forms of argumentation were too limited and illustrating the freedom of the philosopher to look outside Aristotle's works. Sorites had been discussed by ancient philosophers, particularly by Stoics, Eclectics and Sceptics<sup>4</sup> and Valla set out to analyse its usefulness.

Sorites, or 'the heap', is a method of argument which attempts to discredit ideas of limit, especially when the limits depend on quantity. It takes its name from the question: how many grains constitute a heap? Wherever someone tries to set the limit (for example by suggesting that 100 grains constitute a heap) the opponent can say that it is absurd to argue that a group of grains ceases to be a heap when only one grain has been subtracted. This argument can then be applied successively (if 99 grains are a heap, then surely 98 are. If 98 are, then 97. And so on). Once the number becomes too small (if 2 is a heap, then surely 1 is) the whole idea of a 'heap' of grains is called into question.

Valla begins his discussion of sorites by outlining the way in which this form of argumentation works. If one would not be prepared to die for one other citizen, why should one be prepared to die for two? If not for two, why for three? Eventually it is concluded that the person who would not die for one fellow-citizen should not be prepared to die for the whole city. The same process is then applied in reverse to conclude 'if a person would die for the whole city, then he or she should be prepared to die for one citizen'. Valla applies the argument to the example of Christ, who was prepared to die for the whole of humanity and therefore would have been prepared to die for one man (308-309).

Then he turns to an example involving public speaking. If someone is not afraid to speak before one person, why should that person be afraid to speak before the whole city? Valla reflects that Cicero may perhaps be right in saying that we should think no more of the people as a whole than

---

<sup>4</sup> At *Academica*, II, 49 Cicero criticizes his teacher Antiochus for using sorites. Sextus Empiricus (*Outlines*, II, 253, *Adversus Mathematicos*, VII, 416, IX, 182) mentions it in relation to Carneades and Chrysippus, but it is not certain that Valla knew Sextus's works. Sorites was mentioned by later educational writers, e.g. C. Soarez S. J., *De arte rhetorica libri tres* (Venice, 1568), F3<sup>r</sup>-v. On sorites in the ancient world J. Barnes, 'Medicine, Experience and Logic', in J. Barnes et al. ed., *Science and Speculation* (Cambridge, 1982) pp. 24-68 (35-44).

we do of them taken individually. He said 'perhaps' because a large number of hearers demands a different voice, different gestures, and a different oration than a small number, so that the large number makes a difference (309). Valla recalls that in asking God to spare Sodom and Gomorrah because a certain number of just people might be living there, Abraham did not go below ten,

knowing that different numbers do not carry the same weight and that there is more significance in ten than in five, more in twenty than in ten, and more in thirty than in the smaller numbers.<sup>5</sup>

He then considers an example from Horace's *Epistles* in which the problem of deciding how old an author has to be in order to be respectable is compared with the problem of deciding how many hairs constitute a horse's tail, or how old wine needs to be. In Valla's opinion even though the loss of one year or one hair might not be apparent at first, yet each year or hair has some significance and its loss matters. In his view Horace's similes tell against his own argument: Horace himself would raise a satirical eyebrow if someone attempted to argue that a hundred-year-old was no more an old man than a one-year-old.<sup>6</sup>

The same could be said about other things. Hence Cicero in the *Academica*: 'the nature of things has given us no means of knowing limits to enable us to decide exactly how far to go in any matter.' Nor would this apply only to the heap of wheat, which sorites takes its name from, but to any thing at all. By gradual questioning the rich man may be made poor, the bright dark, the many few, the great small and the broad narrow. We do not know for certain how much we should say ought either to be added or taken away.<sup>7</sup>

Valla acknowledges the force of sorites, but his consideration of examples has convinced him that it is unacceptable. The conclusions which can be reached using this argument run too much against his experience and are too destructive of distinctions made in everyday language for him to accept it as a legitimate way of arguing. Valla here takes a philosophical argument in the form its supporters propose and works out his opposition to it

<sup>5</sup> *RDP*, p. 310: 'sciens non idem in diversis numeris esse momenti et plus in decem quam in quinque, et in viginti quam in decem, et in triginta quam in paucioribus.'

<sup>6</sup> *RDP*, pp. 310-311. Horace, *Epistles*, II, 1, 34-49.

<sup>7</sup> *RDP*, pp. 311-312: 'Idem de ceteris rebus dici posset. Unde Cicero in *Academica* inquit 'Rerum natura nullam dedit nobis cognitionem finium, ut ulla in re statuere possimus quatenus'. Nec hoc in acervo tritici solum, unde nomen est, sed ulla omnino in re. Minutatim interrogati dives pauper, clarus obscurus sit, multa pauca, magna parva, longa brevia, late angusta: quanto aut addito aut dempto, certum respondeamus non habemus.' *Academica*, II.29.

through discussion of examples, one of them literary.

### *Knowledge of Greek*

In *Repastinatio* Valla makes use of grammatical knowledge in three ways. He analyses the usage of Latin words and discusses examples from Latin literature. Less frequently he considers the Greek words which underlie Latin Aristotelian terminology.

In each successive version Valla makes more use of his knowledge of Greek. In the third version he quite often gives Greek equivalents for terms and occasionally quotes Aristotle in Greek,<sup>8</sup> though the majority of his Aristotle quotations, including almost all those from the logical works, are in Latin. These are mostly taken from the standard (Boethian) translations.

In chapters five and six of book one (later versions), Valla introduces his discussion of substance with two chapters on the Latin translations for the Greek words ὑπόστασις and οὐσία. First he sets up a dilemma. Quintilian says that *essentia* is the correct translation for οὐσία and Seneca denies that there is a Latin equivalent.<sup>9</sup> Boethius, on the other hand, prefers to translate οὐσία by *substantia*. But *substantia* is constructed in exactly the same way as ὑπόστασις since both consist of two elements 'to stand' and 'under'.

Valla then shows that in other places Boethius uses the word *essentia*, which is equivalent to *esse*. So why does he not use *essentia* to translate οὐσία? Valla offers a number of reasons: there are uses of οὐσία, in which it means wealth, for which *substantia* is the correct alternative (and conversely the Greeks do not use ὑπόστασις to mean wealth); there is the authority of Quintilian, Cicero and Priscian that *substantia* and *essentia* are equivalents;<sup>10</sup> and there is the fact that the Greeks use οὐσία and ὑπόστασις as equivalents.<sup>11</sup> Valla next shows that Aristotle uses οὐσία in several different ways and criticizes him for so doing.<sup>12</sup> Finally Valla returns to his

<sup>8</sup> E.g. *RDP*, pp. 54, 280.

<sup>9</sup> *Institutio oratoria*, 3.6.23, 8.3.33, Seneca, *Epistolae*, 58.6-8.

<sup>10</sup> *Partitiones oratoriae*, 30.106, *Institutio oratoria*, 1. Proem.21, 2.14.2-3, Priscian, *Grammatica*, 18.7.69, 8.12.63 (references from Zippel).

<sup>11</sup> Valla makes his only allusion to the theological import of the distinction between οὐσία and ὑπόστασις here, noting that Jerome wrote that there was poison hiding beneath these two words. While the earlier Greek church treated the two terms as equivalents, the Cappadocian fathers, in order to resolve the Arian controversy proposed distinguishing οὐσία as substance, the being of the single godhead, from ὑπόστασις as person, the being of father, son and holy spirit. This proposal was accepted in the Nicaeno-Constantinopolitan and Athanasian creeds. (J. Hastings ed., *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, s.v. Trinity.)

<sup>12</sup> Valla quotes (in Latin) four uses of οὐσία from *Metaphysics*, 6.3, and three uses from

original problem: should he call *οὐσία*, the first of the categories, 'essence'? In that case he would differ from the accepted usage of Latin. Or should he use 'substance', which differs more from the Greek word and involves inconsistencies of translation (36-46). The criteria of clarity and accustomed usage<sup>13</sup> weigh more heavily with him and he decides to follow Boethius in translating *οὐσία* as substance.

This is an excellent review of the issues of usage and translation involved, and anyone who checks the relevant dictionaries will be impressed with Valla's skill and thoroughness. But it is also a little inconclusive. Valla is not able to establish sharp distinctions between the two terms in each language. At the same time he does not permit himself to conclude, as the modern lexicographer would, that in most philosophical uses, before the Trinitarian controversies of the fourth century AD, *οὐσία* and *ὑπόστασις* are synonyms, as are *substantia* and *essentia*. It is also worth noting that most of the quotation of Aristotle here is in Latin translation, even in the third version. Even so Valla's philological analysis of the philosophical text went beyond his contemporaries. No one else analysed the Greek terms which lay behind the Latin metaphysical vocabulary.

But the philological analysis is curiously separate from the system-building. Since he does not accept what Aristotle says about *οὐσία*, Valla is not ultimately interested in translating. He assigns the name essence to the source of unity within each substance, not because essence is the correct translation of *οὐσία* but because he needs a name for it and essence is temporarily unemployed. Within his system, the word 'essence' is used in a way which has nothing to do with its history as a translation of *οὐσία*, and which contradicts Valla's own demonstration that in Boethius's usage *essentia* and *esse* are the same (37-38).

In his analysis of the Latin quantifiers, Valla explains that some of the inconsistencies result from the fact that *τίς* in Greek has the functions of the Latin words *aliquis*, *quidam* and, on occasion, *quis* (194, 207, 214). He finds worthwhile the distinctions which the Latin words make, but he does not absolve Aristotle from responsibility for the errors which the use of *quidam* (in its ordinary sense) causes in the doctrine of contraries.

Valla is almost exclusively concerned with the Latin tradition of

*De anima*, 2.2.

<sup>13</sup> Abelard, Peter of Spain, Moerbeke and the translators of Aristotle's *Categories* and *Metaphysics* follow Boethius's lead in translating *οὐσία* as *substantia*. See *Aristoteles Latinus*, I, 1-5, XXV, 1-1a, 2.

Aristotelianism.<sup>14</sup> He insists that logic and metaphysics, even when they are based on the work of Greek writers, have to be made to work in Latin, and according to the rules and distinctions of the Latin language. This is an entirely reasonable position, and one to which the Latin Aristotelians would assent, but it is not the position of the historical linguist that Valla is sometimes claimed to be. He does not attempt to understand Aristotle as a philosopher working in the Attic language of his time. Perhaps he was not in a position to. He makes a beginning, in using the differences between the two languages as a source of arguments when they suit his case. But someone who was genuinely interested in the language of Greek philosophy would hardly make essence equivalent to matter, and *would* ask why εἶδος combines the roles which the words 'species' and 'form' play in the Latin tradition. Valla was an historical linguist in the Latin language, which he was trying to revitalize. Greek was more marginal for him, an aid to the understanding of Latin, rather than a separate and equally important study.<sup>15</sup>

### *Latin Usage*

Valla's analysis of Latin usage in his chapters on the signs of quantity and negation is a necessary consequence of his commitment to using the full resources of the Latin language. It is of value even to scholastic logicians, because it illustrates difficulties which occur in their use of Latin. If they use *quidam* according to the rules which they have devised for it, their doctrines will work. If they allow its ordinary meaning to intrude they will fall into error.

Valla is opposed to the existence of the sort of conventionally regulated subset of language with which the Aristotelians operate. He also attacks the step Aristotle made towards formal logic by substituting letters for the terms of the proposition in *Prior Analytics*, comparing him to merchants who so doubt the quality of their goods that they sell them in the half-light.<sup>16</sup>

Valla uses grammatical criteria to argue that *quiditas* is not a word because it is ill-formed: nouns ending in *-itas* cannot be formed from substantives, but only from adjectives (30-36). He argues that *ens* can only

---

<sup>14</sup> Monfasani has pointed out an exception, in which Valla suggests that Aristotle would have done better to use πρόθυμος rather than τὸ ὄν (18), 'Was Lorenzo Valla an ordinary language philosopher?', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 50 (1989), pp. 309-323 (319).

<sup>15</sup> I owe this last suggestion to Jill Kraye.

<sup>16</sup> *Prior Analytics*, 25a14 and very frequently thereafter. *RDP*, pp. 299-300.

be a participle derived from, and equivalent to, *esse* (12-15). Valla's attitude towards language seems rather formal here, as if he thought he could obliterate words purely on the basis of their formation, or of the rules of classical Latin, without considering their uses in medieval philosophy. As if the fact that the words were ill-formed according to his standards dispensed him from having to think about what the scholastics had said with them. Besides being ill-formed, these words had been used by the wrong people. Valla often contrasts the philosophical use of language (*lex veritatis*) with ordinary usage. Almost always ordinary usage is to be preferred.<sup>17</sup>

In his chapter criticizing the folly of using negation badly, he develops his ideas on usage. Speaking ungrammatically is like passing counterfeit money. Each language has its own rules which have to be observed. One should not employ Greek constructions in Latin.

What is the reason for this other than usage? Anyone who revolts against the law of usage ought to be expelled from the ranks of the educated, just as anyone who despises law and custom ought to be expelled from the state.<sup>18</sup>

The standard of usage is not so much the rules of grammar (though they can be called in) as the practice of the learned.<sup>19</sup> So, although Valla appeals to the usage of ordinary people, the real standard is set by a more select body. The usage of medieval logicians does not count. *Consuetudo* shades into *auctoritas*.<sup>20</sup> His criterion is the usage of the best authors, by which he means mainly Quintilian, but also the poets, the orators, and some Christian authors. Sometimes his remarks suggest a degree of flexibility on this point, as when in his discussion of the Latin translations of τίς the usage of Boethius and the philosophers had some weight. While he was discussing history writing he acknowledged that there are things in the world for which the classical authors have no words.<sup>21</sup> The rigidity with

<sup>17</sup> *RDP*, e.g. pp. 26, 130, 168, 386, 387, 395. N. Struever, 'Lorenzo Valla's Grammar', pp. 242-245.

<sup>18</sup> *RDP*, p. 219: 'Cuius rei quid causae est, nisi consuetudo? A qua si quis desciverit, non secus a choro litteratorum explodendus, quam legum morumque contemptor e civitate expellendus est.'

<sup>19</sup> *RDP*, p. 217, quoted in chapter 4, n. 46 above.

<sup>20</sup> Valla's view of *consuetudo* thus puts him among the classicizers as far as the recording of language is concerned. M. Tavoni, 'Lorenzo Valla e il volgare', in O. Besomi and M. Regoliosi eds., *Lorenzo Valla e l'umanesimo italiano* (Padua, 1986), pp. 199-217 reminds us that Valla's idea of *consuetudo* rested on the practice of particular classical authors rather than on the everyday (vernacular) language of his own times.

<sup>21</sup> *Invectivae in Facium 1, Opera omnia*, I, p. 504: 'Nova res novum vocabulum

which Valla sometimes applies the rules of formal grammar and classical usage indicates the limitations of his view of language (no technical sub-languages, no contexts in which special senses apply), but it is more probably a response to the needs of his argument. Where it suits him the rules will be applied with more rigour than elsewhere.

*Literary examples*

The index of sources at the end of Zippel's edition reveals that the authors most mentioned in the book are, as one would expect, Aristotle, Boethius, Cicero and Quintilian.<sup>22</sup> There are also many references to the Bible. Less frequently cited but still prominent are the poets Homer, Horace, Juvenal, Lucan, Lucretius, Ovid, Persius, and Virgil, and the dramatists Plautus and Terence.

While it is unusual to find such authors quoted in a dialectic book, in most cases the quotations serve orthodox grammatical or humanist purposes. Many of the quotations support Valla's claims about how particular words are used, in connection sometimes with the classification of reality in book one, sometimes with the analysis of quantifiers in book two. Quite a number of poetic uses of adjectives are quoted in the chapter discussing concrete and abstract.<sup>23</sup> In these cases we often find several poetic quotations together.

As one would expect, quotations from poetry are also employed more decoratively, to show off Valla's erudition in finding a parallel, or to support some learned observation about the ancient world.<sup>24</sup> One Virgil quotation forms the basis of an argument against Aulus Gellius on the need for emendation in a passage from the *Georgics* (117).

The authors are sometimes cited in more strictly logical arguments, as when Terence is quoted in connection with the argument about the mean:

In the same way darkness is more opposed and contrary to light, and light to darkness, than shade which is neither light nor darkness. This fact is known even to slaves and parasites, provided we assign their remarks to Parmeno and Gnatho and not Terence. Gnatho is asked by Parmeno what he thinks of a girl's appearance. Because he does not want to say 'good' lest he should praise a gift belonging to a rival, and he is unable to say 'bad', since her beauty was above reproach, he replies

---

flagitat.'

<sup>22</sup> *RDP*, pp. 618-635. These references should always be checked in the text because the index does not differentiate between Valla's own quotations and parallels supplied by the editor.

<sup>23</sup> *RDP*, e.g. pp. 16-17, 104-107, 139, 184-186, 192, 218, 21-27.

<sup>24</sup> *RDP*, e.g. pp. 14, 53, 54, 76, 78.

Not bad, by Hercules.

And although it is not denied that those things which are called 'not bad' can be good and are good, yet they are not actually affirmed to be good either, as if negation indicates difference rather than opposition or contrariety.<sup>25</sup>

In this instance Valla uses context to give a plausible account of the meaning of the expression. But the fact of needing to supply so much contextual information can tell against him, since in general use 'not bad' seems more an admission of measured approval than a sign of indifference. We have already seen how Valla employs (and criticizes) a quotation from Horace's *Epistles* in the course of his discussion of sorites. In considering dilemma and conversion, two other non-Aristotelian forms which he includes in his treatment of argumentation, Valla begins with a quotation from Aulus Gellius and develops his argument through a declamation.

### *A Declamation*

Aulus Gellius relates that a certain Evathlus has taken rhetoric lessons from Protagoras on the understanding that the second half of his fee will be paid when he wins his first case. Evathlus refuses to undertake any cases. Protagoras takes him to court and concentrates his case on a dilemma. If Evathlus loses the case, he will have to pay the fee because of the judgement of the court. If, on the other hand, Evathlus wins, he will have won his first case and will therefore have to pay the fee because of their agreement. Protagoras uses the dilemma to argue that Evathlus will have to pay him whatever the outcome of the case. Gellius commends Evathlus's reply which turns the dilemma back on Protagoras. According to Evathlus, if he loses the case the agreement will prevent him from paying, while if he wins the judgement will. The judges are unable to decide for either party.<sup>26</sup>

Valla considers Evathlus's argument ineffective and the judges'

---

<sup>25</sup> *RDP*, pp. 162-163: 'Quemadmodum tenebrae sunt magis adversae atque contrariae luci et lux tenebris, quam umbra quae nec lux est nec tenebrae. Quod servis quoque atque parasitis ignotum non est, si modo Parmeno et Gnatho dicendi sunt, et non Terentius loqui. Interrogatus a Parmenone Gnatho, quid de puellae forma sentiret, quia nec bonam dicere volebat ne laudaret hostile donum, nec malam dicere poterat, quia maior erat pulchritudo quam ut vituperare posset, respondit non mala, hercle.

Et quamvis ea, quae dicitur 'non mala', non negetur esse bona possitque et bona esse, tamen nec bona esse affirmatur, ut potius sit in negatione diversitas quam adversitas et contrarietas.' Terence, *Eunuchus*, 273-274.

<sup>26</sup> Aulus Gellius, *Noctes atticae*, 5.10.5-16. *RDP*, pp. 312-314, 562-564. The story is also told of Corax and Tisias. Dilemma and this story also appear after the account of sorites in C. Soarez, *De arte rhetorica*, n. 4 above, F3<sup>v</sup>-4<sup>v</sup>.

behaviour unjust, and, after trying to show the shortcomings of the argument *antistrephon*, or conversion of the dilemma, through a discussion of an example from Lactantius (8-11), he imagines himself making an oration on Protagoras's behalf.<sup>27</sup>

His first move is to establish a distinction between the arguments addressed to the judges, and those addressed to his opponent. Beginning with the judges, he insists that they must give judgement because of the wrong to Protagoras, because it is their duty to judge and because what he said was addressed to his opponent. They are concerned with the case, not with the litigants. Let them imagine Protagoras said nothing (12-14).

Then he discusses the dilemma Protagoras constructed. He argues that Protagoras's words showed no disrespect to the judges. If they decided for Protagoras, he would insist on their judgement being carried out. If, on the other hand, they decided in Evathlus's favour, Protagoras was not disputing their sentence, but stating that a new situation would have been created, one in which the condition foreseen in the contract would have been met (15).

Then Valla imagines the judges' confusion and feeling of frustration at the dilemma posed and the response to it, providing them with an expression of their feelings ('shall we condemn Evathlus? But that will absolve him....Shall we absolve him? But that will condemn him....').<sup>28</sup> He replies to this by taking up each side of the dilemma again. If you condemn Evathlus, he is condemned. If you absolve him, he will have his victory. There is no self-contradiction involved in their making a judgement (16-18).

Valla then imagines the further objection from the judges that, as part of the dilemma, Protagoras invited judgement against himself. In that case, Protagoras would be able to seek another trial. Valla voices the judges' fear that this will lead to other judges altering their decision. He replies that this will not be an appeal but a new case, undertaken in new circumstances. He may even bring the new case back to this very court, if they are embarrassed at the idea of having their sentence rescinded by other judges (19-20).

Having explained to the judges the meaning of Protagoras's own words, Valla turns to the words of Evathlus, which are the real cause of confusion.

---

<sup>27</sup> *RDP*, pp. 565-568. Numbers in the text are Zippel's paragraph numbers for this version.

<sup>28</sup> *RDP*, p. 565: 'Damnamus Evathlum? at absolvimus... Absolvimus? at damnamus.'

(Here Valla's real motive of teaching his reader may outweigh the fictional motive of winning the case.) To the first part of Protagoras's dilemma ('you will owe me as a result of the sentence') Evathlus has replied, 'I will not owe you on account of the agreement'. This is correct. He will not owe Protagoras on account of the agreement, but because of the sentence. To the second part ('if you win the case, you will owe me as a result of the agreement') Evathlus has replied 'I will not owe you on account of the sentence' (22).<sup>29</sup>

At this point Valla turns in a more impassioned voice to address Evathlus who has been most ungrateful to Protagoras and extremely troublesome to the judges. 'When I press you in relation to the sentence, you reply not with reference to it, but to the agreement. When I press you in relation to the agreement, you reply not with reference to it, but to the sentence'.<sup>30</sup> Valla (speaking for Protagoras) gives Evathlus the choice, insisting that he must choose one alternative, and not both. If he loses the case but refuses to obey the sentence of the judges, it will show contempt. If he wins the case, his victory will mean that he owes money to Protagoras (23-26).

Having accused Evathlus of bad logic and inconsistency, Valla turns back to the judges. Even if they cannot give judgement for Protagoras, because the conditions of the agreement have not yet been fulfilled, they can decide that Evathlus should pay the rest of the fee in order to promote equity. This depends on their own sense of justice and fairness. Returning to the theme with which he began, Valla presents Protagoras as so reasonable that he is even prepared to lose his own case. He requests only one thing of the judges: that they should give a definite judgement, one way or the other (27-29).

Inevitably this speech is much concerned with the form of the dilemma, and the need to consider the real implications of both halves. Apart from this, Valla concentrates on arguments concerned with the difference between address to the judges, and address to the opponent, covering the objections and fears of the judges, and pointing out the deceptive appearance and logical inconsistency of Evathlus's reply. His main positive

<sup>29</sup> *RDP*, p. 567: 'Ad primam rationis meae partem: 'si contra se, lis data esset, mercedem mihi eum ex sententia debitorum', ipse ait 'se non debitum ex pacto'. Hoc ego iudices assentior planeque fateor quod non ex pacto, sed ex sententia. Ad alteram partem: 'si esset iudicatum secundum se, mercedem mihi ex pacto deberi', hic ait 'non deberi ex sententia'.'

<sup>30</sup> *RDP*, p. 567: 'cum de sententia tecum ago, de hac non respondes, sed de pacto; cum de pacto, tu non de hoc, sed de illa respondes?'

arguments are the wrong done to Protagoras by Evathlus's refusal to practise, and the obligation on the judges to give sentence. Most of these points arise from thinking about the circumstances of the case, the exact words employed and the duties of the judges. Valla is also careful to pay attention to the feelings of the judges, imagining replies they would wish to make, and trying to answer their objections. The argument from time is also important. In composing this oration Valla follows Quintilian's teaching about the use of the topics and the importance of considering the circumstances of the case and the arguments available on the other side. He also observes Quintilian's precepts on disposition. The oration begins with a strong point which is re-emphasized at the end, and it concludes with a plea based on the ingratitude of the pupil and the injustice suffered by the teacher. A full narration is not required in this example, but the way in which Valla goes over the terms of the dilemma and reply serves the function of an exposition.<sup>31</sup>

### *The Preface to Book One*

Valla's own rhetorical skills are also on display in the preface to book one, on the importance of freedom of thought.<sup>32</sup> He begins by praising Pythagoras for insisting that he was a lover of wisdom (philosopher) and refusing to be called wise. As a seeker after truth he could, like anyone else, be wrong. His followers had to be free to express their own opinions, even where these contradicted his own views. Pythagoras's greatest achievement was the gift to later philosophers of this outlook. Valla contrasts Pythagoras's modesty with the impudence of the Aristotelians who solve all disputes by saying 'the Philosopher has spoken', this is Aristotle's opinion. After attacking Aristotle's character, he points out that the best known figures of antiquity were mostly Stoics, Epicureans, Sceptics or Platonists. Hardly any of them followed Aristotle.

In later versions of the preface Valla expands on his criticisms of Aristotle. He claims that Aristotle performed none of the deeds characteristic of a great man, but merely compiled more books than others.

---

<sup>31</sup> When he revised the speech for later versions of the book, Valla strengthened the phrasing in several places (especially near the beginning) and he took more care to avoid any impression of insubordination to the judges in describing the dilemma. The later version appears at *RDP*, pp. 316-320. the more significant changes of phrasing are in sections 16, 18 and 19 (Zippel's numbers).

<sup>32</sup> The variations between the two versions are worth some attention, *RDP*, pp. 1-8, 359-363. S. Rizzo prints a yet earlier version discovered by the late Riccardo Ribuoli, in O. Besomi ed., *Lorenzo Valla e l'umanesimo italiano*, pp. 241-263.

At the same time some of the exuberances of the style are toned down.<sup>33</sup> Valla makes two new points. A thorough knowledge of Latin and Greek, though it is hard to acquire, is an essential preparation for philosophy. Recent theologians have betrayed their calling because of their ignorance of languages and their excessive devotion to Aristotle. Valla's aim in confuting Aristotelianism is to restore true theology, that is a theology based on the study of the Bible and the Church Fathers.<sup>34</sup>

The preface is full of rhetorical ornament: personation, exclamations, repetitions, irony and paradox. There is an easy display of miscellaneous knowledge of antiquity: the sayings of Pythagoras and Socrates, the early history of Rome and (doubtful) facts about Aristotle's life. Valla evidently aims to appeal to a reader interested in the classical world and its literature, and to provoke orthodox Aristotelians. But the preface also makes a serious point in an effective way. There is a history of philosophy outside Aristotelianism. Most of Aristotle's works explain how they disagree with earlier positions. The possibility of criticizing any philosopher is a prerequisite of continuing life for philosophy.<sup>35</sup> When Valla was writing it was important to make these points. Late scholastic logic (late scholastic philosophy in general, for that matter) needed to be asked whether the Aristotelian framework was worth maintaining, whether it was still appropriate to formulate all questions as problems of textual interpretation

<sup>33</sup> Main additions cited are sections 11-15, 17-18 (Zippel's numbers). *RDP*, pp. 5-8. Valla's *Encomium of St Thomas Aquinas* is important to the argument developed here.

<sup>34</sup> In the preface to the fourth book of the *Elegantiae* Valla defends rhetoric by a comparison with philosophy. Whereas ancient philosophy is the source of heresies, rhetoric helps Christian writers organise their thoughts effectively and express them in such a way that they move their audience. Rhetoric is essential to theology. The eloquent are the pillars of the church. *Opera Omnia*, I, pp. 117-120.

<sup>35</sup> L. Jardine has argued ('Lorenzo Valla: Academic Scepticism and the new humanist dialectic', in M. F. Burnyeat ed., *The Sceptical Tradition* (Berkeley, 1983), pp. 253-286) that in *Repastinatio* Valla took the position of an academic sceptic, on the basis of the preface, an argument from book three which is said to be a hidden citation of a sceptical argument from *De natura deorum*, and Valla's alleged approval of sorites. But the preface of the first version includes the sceptics among the schools Valla does not belong to (362) and, as we have seen, Valla rejects sorites. In his letter to Serra Valla writes of attacking writers from many schools, 'almost after the manner of the sceptics' ('quasi more Academicorum' - *Epistolae*, p. 208). In *De libero arbitrio*, Valla twice states that the sceptics are wrong in saying that nothing is fully known to us (though he agrees that there are many things which are not fully known), *Opera omnia*, I, pp. 1000-1001. Valla does not doubt the evidence of his senses, he does not contest the notion of truth (*RDP*, pp. 378, 19-20, 239-243) and he does not suspend judgement. On the contrary, he asserts that words express things as they are, and he sets out a thorough-going metaphysical system of his own. There is no real case for proposing that *Repastinatio dialecticae et philosophiae* puts forward a sceptical position. See J. Monfasani, chapter 2, n. 22 above, pp. 192-193. The same arguments and some others were given independently in my 1983 Ph.D thesis, appendix 4, pp. 368-373.

rather than approach the problems more directly. The plea for freedom of thought was a precondition of modern philosophy.

Valla's point was also strongly argued. Almost everything in the first version of the preface can be connected through the topics with the theme of philosophical liberty. He argues from the etymology of the word, from the example of Pythagoras and the authority of Socrates. He attacks the contrary position of deference to authority. He illustrates the freedom of philosophers to differ by pointing out the popularity in the ancient world of a number of schools of philosophy. From the principle of philosophical liberty, he draws two correlative conclusions: that it is acceptable to disagree with Aristotle, and that those who join a school which obliges them to agree with anything a particular authority says are doing themselves an injustice.

The preface is stylishly written and forcefully argued. It does not have the structure of an oration but the force with which it sets out a position and marshals arguments against Aristotelianism makes it a model of argument in natural language. The preface prepares for Valla's attacks on Aristotelian doctrines and exemplifies the product of a language-based logic. At the same time it asserts the value of grammar (the theologians' need of languages) and rhetoric (the orator as the ideal of leadership).

### *The Trivium*

In the preface to book two, Valla makes a comparison between rhetoric and dialectic. He attacks the pretensions of other dialecticians who have written complicated books and made many mistakes in discussing a subject which is simple and has only a few precepts (175).

For dialectic used to be an entirely brief and simple thing, which can be seen from a comparison with rhetoric. For what is dialectic but a kind of confirmation and confutation? These very things are parts of invention, which is one of the five parts of rhetoric. 'The use of the syllogism belongs to the dialectician.' What? Doesn't the orator use the same thing? Indeed he uses not only the syllogism but also the enthymeme and epicheireme, and you can also add induction. But see what the difference is. The dialectician uses the syllogism naked (as one might say). The orator uses it clothed in purple, and armed and decorated with gold and gems: so that, if the orator wishes them to appear, the syllogism has a vast wealth of precepts at his disposal. Poverty becomes the dialectician, I would almost have said. Because the orator not only wishes to teach, as the dialectician does, but he also wants to please and to move. These sometimes contribute more to victory than proof does. All the same the orator does not only aim at victory or always occupy himself with lawsuits. He also urges honourable things and those which belong to living well and happily, and dissuading people from disgraceful or useless things. He praises and disparages what

merits praise or disparagement. I do not know whether this is the most necessary or rather the greatest task of all, because we are manifestly born for the purpose of praising the works of God and the creator himself, and we shall also do the same in the next life. And just as we use one garment when we go out in public and another when we do something at home, and one when we act as a magistrate, and another when we are private citizens, because we must cater to the eyes of the people, in the same way the dialectician, whose speech is domestic and private, will not aim at that same splendour and majesty of speech as the orator will. The orator must speak before the whole city and must largely suit his speech to the ears of the public. Beyond this he must have considerable expertise in the greatest matters, that extremely delicate skill of handling minds, experience of several activities, acquaintance with all peoples and with history, and above all, moral probity in his life and exceptional dignity of mind as well as eminence of body and voice, since the orator is virtually the ruler and leader of the people. For this reason rhetoric is by far the most difficult subject, arduous and not to be taken on by everyone. For it rejoices in sailing on the open sea and among the waves and in flying with full and sounding sails, nor does it give way to the waves, but rules them. I am speaking of the highest and most perfect eloquence. Dialectic, on the other hand, is the friend of security, the fellow of the shores, looking at the lands rather than the seas, it rows near the shore and the rocks.

Nor do I say this in order to detract from the art about which I am speaking, which I can and should commend. This would belong either to someone unwise or to someone of ill will, who deserved ill of his own work. But am I one who can disguise what I think and lie to those whom out of a certain sense of patriotism I have undertaken to teach? That would be the act of a vain and treacherous man! I have done this first because I like to speak the truth candidly, then in order to lead those same people into hope that they may acquire knowledge of this science quickly and easily, as I surely can lead them, because no discipline seems to me shorter or easier than dialectic, as one can learn dialectic, which serves other more important subjects, thoroughly in scarcely more months than grammar takes years.<sup>36</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup> *RDP*, pp. 175-177: ‘Erat enim dialectica res brevis prorsus et facilis, id quod ex comparatione rhetoricae diiudicari potest. Nam quid aliud est dialectica, quam species confirmationis et confutationis? Hae ipsae sunt partes inventionis, inventio una ex quinque rhetoricae partibus. ‘Dialectici est syllogismo uti’. Quid, non orator eodem utitur? Immo utitur nec eo solo, verum etiam enthymemate et epicheiremate, adde etiam inductionem. Sed vide quid interest. Dialecticus utitur ‘nudo’ (ut sic loquar) syllogismo, orator autem ‘vestito armatoque, auro et purpura ac gemmis ornato’: ut multae sint ei et magnae praceptorum comparandae divitiae, si videri volet orator. Dialecticum, prope dixerim, paupertas decet. Quoniam non tantum vult docere orator, ut dialecticus facit, sed delectare etiam ac movere, quae nonnunquam ad victoriam plus valent quam ipsa probatio; tametsi non ad solam semper victoriam tendit neque semper versatur in litibus, sed in suadendis honestis et ad bene beateque vivendum pertinentibus dissuadendisque turpibus atque inutilibus, in laudendis vituperandisque quae laudem mereantur aut vituperationem. Quod opus nescio an sit vel maximum, quod ad laudanda Dei opera atque ipsum opificem nati videmur, idem quoque in altera vita facturi. Atque sicuti nos alio vestitu utimur cum prodimus in publicum, alio cum

In this passage, Valla sets out the breadth and difficulty of the orator's task. In order to give all three kinds of oration, to praise God and to lead the people, the orator must master many different kinds of knowledge and skill. Where the dialectician will only teach his audience, the orator must also move and please them. Where the dialectician will use the forms of argumentation plainly, the orator will dress them up in the most splendid language.

Dialectic is part of a part of rhetoric. It is much easier to learn, but it is also of use to far more people. Rhetoric is much more powerful but only exceptional people will need, or be able, to master it. Everyone needs to learn dialectic, but it takes much less time to learn than the classical languages which precede it.

Valla condemns the activities of recent logicians, whom he always characterises as cavilling and deceitful. He attacks their practice of disputation in which the glory of winning is emphasized more than the goal of reaching truth (277). In the preface to book three he likens their coining of new words and avoidance of customary ways of speaking to fighting with poisoned weapons and to going over from the camp of wisdom to the wilderness of ignorance.

Consequently from now on let these dialecticians and philosophers not persevere in the ignorance of their own kinds of words but direct

---

agimus aliquid intra domum, itemque alio cum magistratus, alio cum privati sumus, propterea quod serviendum est oculis populi, ita dialecticus, cuius domesticus et privatus est sermo, non eum captabit dicendi nitorem eamque maiestatem quam captabit orator: cui apud universam civitatem dicendum et multum publicis auribus dandum est, cui, insuper, adesse debet multa magnarum rerum peritia, perdifficilis quedam tractandorum animorum scientia, usus complurium negotiorum, omnium populorum omnisque memoriae gestorum notitia, et ante omnia sanctitas vitae ac eximia quedam animi dignitas et corporis vocisque praestantia. Siquidem orator est velut rector et dux populi. Propter quod longe difficillima rhetorica est et ardua, nec omnibus capessenda. Namque lato mari mediisque in undis vagari et tumidis ac sonantibus velis volitare gaudet, nec fluctibus cedit, sed imperat: de summa et perfecta loquor eloquentia. Dialectica vero amica securitatis, socia litorum, terras potius quam maria intuens, prope oras et scopulos remigat.

Neque vero hoc dico ut arti de qua loquor, quam commendare et possum et debo, derogem: quod foret vel imprudentis vel maligni et de opere suo male merentis. Verum qui possim dissimulare quod sentio et apud eos quos erudiendos patria quadam caritate suscepi, mentiri? Res et vani hominis et perfidi. Itaque hoc feci primum quia loqui verum ingenue placet, deinde ut hos ipsos in spem adducerem ad hanc scientiam brevi facileque percipiendam, ut vere possum adducere, quia nulla mihi doctrina brevior faciliorque quam dialectica videtur, ut quae aliis maioribus servit, quam vix intra plures quis menses quam grammaticam intra annos perdiscret.<sup>7</sup> The reference to dialecticians using syllogisms, while orators use enthymemes suggests (though the quotation is not exact) that Valla's target here is the passage in *De differentiis topicis*, book 4 (PL 64, 1206C-D and following) in which Boethius argues that rhetoric is dependent on dialectic. M. Leff, 'Boethius's *De differentiis topicis*, Book IV', in J. J. Murphy ed., *Medieval Eloquence* (Berkeley, 1978), pp. 3-24.

themselves to natural language and the words used by the learned since they will achieve nothing if they do otherwise: for the truth concerning many words, about which there was gross error, has been set out by me, and will also continue to be from now on. They themselves will see whether they wish to do this. Certainly those who do not belong to that sect have, as a result of my efforts, arms, by which they can not only keep the enemies, or rather the fugitives, of truth from the camps of wisdom but also send them beyond all boundaries, capture them and throw them in chains.<sup>37</sup>

Logic and philosophy are to be recalled, from their use of specialized vocabularies and rules, to the common language of the learned. His work aims to expose the trickeries of philosophical language, and force dialecticians and philosophers back to using natural language.

These three prefaces, in fact, direct us to the most valuable aspects of Valla's achievement. Valla was astonishingly bold in attacking Aristotle over such a wide range of doctrines. Much of what he wrote was unthinkable for other fifteenth-century authors. In attacking Aristotle and in proposing a simplified metaphysical system of his own Valla made an important statement about the need for freedom of thought and for the questioning of accepted opinions. The reduction of Aristotle's authority was a necessary step in the growth of speculation which characterises the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. At the very least Valla deserves credit as a prophet of this particular intellectual revolution. But recognition of Valla's boldness as a critic of Aristotle must be tempered with recollection of the unfairness of many of his criticisms. Valla's own metaphysics was both inconsistent and ultimately dependent on Aristotle's.

*Repastinatio* also contributes to rebuilding the unity of the *trivium* on humanist principles. Throughout books two and three Valla writes a dialectic of natural language. Instead of restricting dialectic to a few conventional signs and a single sentence structure, Valla insists on describing the argumentative use of a range of Latin words. He discusses examples of arguments from Latin literature and from the Bible. By this means he brings dialectic back into contact with humanist descriptive grammar, exemplified at its best by his own work in *Elegantiae* (and in the

---

<sup>37</sup> *RDP*, pp. 277-278: 'Proinde nolint posthac dialectici isti atque philosophantes in suorum quorundam vocabulorum inscitia perseverare, sed ad naturalem et a doctis tritum sermonem se convertere, cum praesertim nihil sint, si aliter faciant, profecturi: patefacta per me plurimorum verborum, in quibus maxime errabatur, veritate, ut deinceps etiam patefi. Hoc tamen an facere velint, ipsi viderint. Certe qui illius sectae non sunt per me arma habent, quibus veritatis hostes, ac potius perfugas, non modo a castris sapientiae arcere, sed etiam omnibus finibus exterminare, capere, in vincla conicere queant.'

surveys of usage in *Repastinatio* itself).

Valla also promotes and clarifies the connection between rhetoric and dialectic. For him dialectic is simple and brief and useful to many people, whereas only a few will go on to master the more difficult skills of the orator. He has no wish to compose a new manual of rhetoric because Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria* already exists. Valla's use of the methods of all three subjects also supports the unity of the *trivium*. So does his criterion of usefulness, emphasizing the role of argument in particular attempts at persuasion, rejecting the self-contained research involved in late scholastic logic. When he directs attention to the importance of finding arguments, using the topics, and treats the syllogism as merely one of a range of forms in which argument can be expressed, Valla makes dialectic and rhetoric parallel in structure. In both cases expression is subsequent to invention.

It is surely right to see *Repastinatio* as one of the most original and challenging works of the fifteenth century in philosophy and in dialectic. But one must be wary of overstating its prescience or its influence. Valla recalls the connection between dialectic and rhetoric but he does not develop it in the way that Agricola and his followers would. Within *Repastinatio* Valla never discusses the grouping of arguments or the construction of whole works. He sometimes argues in a rhetorical manner but the basic content and structure of his book is inherited from the first three books of Aristotle's *Organon*. *Repastinatio* is a long and difficult book which describes a dialectic which is brief and simple. It is ironic, to say the least, that *Isagoge dialectica* (1433), by George of Trebizond, Valla's rival of the 1450s, enjoyed great success in the sixteenth century as a simple introduction to Aristotelian dialectic. Valla would not have liked the idea that he may have prepared the way for George.

### *Influence*

In historical terms the impact of *Repastinatio dialecticae et philosophiae* was disproportionately small in relation to its bold originality. As with his other works, Valla circulated it to his friends, but we have no record of the letters they sent back. Nor is there any near contemporary record of a defence of Aristotelianism against Valla's charges. It appears that his opponents could afford to ignore his attacks or dismiss them in general ways, as Poggio did.<sup>38</sup> By the time of Valla's death it was quite hard to

---

<sup>38</sup> On the quarrel between Valla and Poggio see L. Valla, *Antidotum primum*, ed. A.

obtain a manuscript of *Repastinatio dialecticae et philosophiae*. It is even possible that he suppressed the work. Presumably there was a manuscript in Ferrara, since Agricola evidently read the work. Prior to the collected editions of Valla's works (Basel, 1540 and 1543) there were five printed editions of the second version: Milan, 1496-7, Paris, 1509, 1530 and Cologne 1530, 1541.<sup>39</sup> Valla's view that theology should abandon its dependence on dialectic and cultivate the ancient languages (7) was taken up by Erasmus and More.<sup>40</sup> More and Vives echo Valla's criticism of late scholastic logic and speculative grammar (331-332, 217), without using the same instances or supporting his positive doctrines.<sup>41</sup> Some sixteenth-century logicians show detailed knowledge of *Repastinatio*, particularly humanist commentators.<sup>42</sup> Gerardus Listrius knew it fairly well, but he did not see the full implications of Valla's positions, and in general read him through Agricola.<sup>43</sup> Nifo also knew Valla's work at first hand.<sup>44</sup> Some of Valla's general themes (real language as the subject of dialectic, the importance of invention, non-syllogistic forms of argument) are found in many sixteenth-century dialectics,<sup>45</sup> but it is much harder to be certain that these ideas came to those authors from Valla, particularly when so little of the detail of his dialectic was passed on. *Elegantiae*, on the other hand, was extremely well known in the sixteenth century.<sup>46</sup>

A significant exception to this picture of neglect is Mario Nizolio (1488-1567), the author of the Cicero dictionary, *Observationes in M. T.*

Wesseling (Assen, 1978), introduction.

<sup>39</sup> Erasmus, *Stultitiae laus in Opera omnia*, IV, 1 (Amsterdam, 1979) pp. 146-154, 'Letter to Dorp' in *Opus epistolarum*, ed. P. S. Allen, II (Oxford, 1910), pp. 101-102, More, 'Letter to Dorp', in *Complete Works of St Thomas More*, XV, ed. D. Kinney (New Haven, 1986), pp. 60-64.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 26-32, *Utopia*, *Complete Works of St Thomas More*, IV, ed. Edward Surtz S.J. and J. H. Hexter (New Haven, 1965), p. 158, Rita Guerlac, *Juan Luis Vives Against the Pseudodialecticians* (Dordrecht, 1979), D. Kinney, 'More's letter to Dorp: Remapping the Trivium', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 34 (1981), pp. 179-210, S. I. Camporeale, 'Da Lorenzo Valla a Tommaso Moro', *Memorie Domenicane*, n.s., 4 (1973), pp. 9-102.

<sup>41</sup> *RDP*, pp. xxxiii-xlii.

<sup>42</sup> Valla is occasionally cited in Alardus's commentary on *De inventione dialectica*, in Noviomagus's commentary on George of Trebizon's *Isagoge dialectica*, and in dialectical works by Cantiuncula, Apell and Visorius. See my 'Valla's Dialectic in the North 2: Further Commentaries', *Vivarium*, 30 (1993), pp. 256-75.

<sup>43</sup> P. Mack, 'Valla's Dialectic in the North: A Commentary on Peter of Spain By Gerardus Listrius', *Vivarium*, 21 (1983), pp. 58-72.

<sup>44</sup> L. Jardine, 'Dialectic or Dialectical Rhetoric: Agostino Nifo's Criticism of Lorenzo Valla', *Rivista critica di storia della filosofia*, 36 (1981), pp. 253-270.

<sup>45</sup> They are found, for example in Ramus and Melanchthon, but neither of them accepts Valla's diminution in the role of the syllogism.

<sup>46</sup> See chapter 2, note 1.

*Ciceronem* (1535).<sup>47</sup> His *De veris principiis* (1553) attacks Aristotelian dialectic and metaphysics, arguing that they should be expelled from the arts curriculum, which should instead be devoted to rhetoric. Nizolio often refers to Valla with approval and he supports many of the positions set out in *Repastinatio*, for example: that such medieval and Aristotelian metaphysical doctrines as secondary substances, second intentions, and concrete sense are empty;<sup>48</sup> that *res* is the only transcendental and the genus to which everything else belongs;<sup>49</sup> his definitions of *differentia* and property;<sup>50</sup> that Aristotle was wrong to give souls to plants; that a substance has contraries and can be intensified or lessened;<sup>51</sup> that quantity is a part of quality;<sup>52</sup> that both orator and dialectician use all types of argument but the orator embellishes them; that dialectic is really a subdivision of rhetoric;<sup>53</sup> that the true standard of philosophical language is ordinary usage;<sup>54</sup> and that liberty of thought is essential to the philosopher.<sup>55</sup> He also compliments Valla for his preparedness to attack Aristotle directly rather than criticizing only his translators or commentators.<sup>56</sup>

These opinions indicate the strength of Nizolio's support for Valla. But he also criticizes Valla's scheme of three categories, since he regards action as part of quality.<sup>57</sup> Towards the beginning of his book Nizolio compares himself with Valla. Valla has pulled off some of the leaves and branches of the Aristotelian tree, but he is going to pull up the trunk by the roots.<sup>58</sup> *De veris principiis* was printed only once in the sixteenth century, though Leibniz supervised a second edition in 1670, and no other sixteenth-century authors with similar views have so far been identified.

---

<sup>47</sup> This work was printed at least seventy times before 1620, J. Monfasani, 'Humanism and Rhetoric', in A. Rabil jr ed., *Renaissance Humanism: Foundations, Forms and Legacy*, 3 vols. (Philadelphia, 1988), III, pp. 171-235 (195, 228).

<sup>48</sup> M. Nizolio, *De veris principiis*, ed. Q. Breen, 2 vols. (Rome, 1956), I, pp. 57, 86, 203-205.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, I, pp. 189-193.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, I, pp. 156-158.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, I, pp. 201, 204.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, I, p. 211.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, II, pp. 52, 140.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, I, p. 146.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, I, pp. 26-28.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, II, p. 192.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, I, pp. 189, 195-197.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, I, pp. 34-35.

## CHAPTER SIX

### RUDOLPH AGRICOLA AND *DE INVENTIONE DIALECTICA*

Rudolph Agricola completed his major work, *De inventione dialectica* in Dillingen, near Augsburg, in August 1479.<sup>1</sup> He had begun it a few months earlier, shortly before leaving Ferrara. In all he had spent some ten years in Italy, first as a law student in Pavia, later as a student of classical literature and unofficial teacher of the same subject to his fellow northerners (most of whose official studies were in law) in Pavia and in Ferrara.

Agricola was born Roelof Huusman at Baflo near Groningen on 17 February 1444.<sup>2</sup> His father was Hendrik Vries, who from 1440 was parish priest at Baflo, then one of the six most important parishes in the hinterland of Groningen. On the day of his son's birth Hendrik was made Abbot of the prosperous Benedictine convent of Selwerd, as he is reported to have said 'becoming a father twice in the same hour'. He remained Abbot until his death in 1480, extending the convent's lands and overseeing a flowering of its scriptorium.

Thanks to his father's influence with the Bishop of Münster, Agricola's

---

<sup>1</sup> P. S. Allen, 'The Letters of Rudolph Agricola', *The English Historical Review*, 21 (1906), pp. 302-317 (312). The date comes from Württembergische Landesbibliothek Stuttgart, Cod. Poet. et Philol. 4o 36, fol. 172<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> The principal sources for the life of Agricola are: his letters, listed in Allen, cit., and F. Akkerman and A. J. Vanderjagt eds., *Rodolphus Agricola Phrisius* (Leiden, 1988), hereafter *RAP*, pp. 321-326. Most of the letters are printed in *Lucubrationes* (Cologne, 1539, reprinted Nieuwkoop, 1967), hereafter *Lucubrationes* (1539), or K. Hartfelder, 'Unedierte Briefe von Rudolf Agricola', *Festchrift der badischen Gymnasien* (Karlsruhe, 1886), pp. 1-36, hereafter *Briefe*. There are also six early biographies (listed at *RAP*, p. 326) and two biographies in Dutch: H. E. J. M. Van der Velden, *Rodolphus Agricola* (Leiden, 1911), M. A. Nauwelaerts, *Rodolphus Agricola* (The Hague, 1963). Recent studies which make contributions to the life are: J. M. Weiss, 'The six lives of Rudolph Agricola: forms and functions of the humanist biography', *Humanistica Lovaniensia*, 30 (1981), pp. 19-39, F. Akkerman 'Rudolf Agricola, een humanistenleven', *Algemeen Nederlands tijdschrift voor wijsbegeerte*, 75 (1983), pp. 25-43, 'De Neolatijnse epistolografie: Rudolf Agricola', *Lampas*, 18 (1985), pp. 319-335, and the contributions to *RAP* by Akkerman, Sottili, Bakker, and Kooiman, pp. 3-20, 79-111, 136-146. Earlier accounts in English: L. W. Spitz, 'Agricola: Father of Humanism', *The Religious Renaissance of the German Humanists* (Cambridge, Mass., 1963), pp. 20-40, and chapter 3 of my PhD thesis, pp. 85-147. The life given there is based on these sources. Only a few points are here documented in detail.

studies were supported by the rent of a farm in Baflo.<sup>3</sup> In 1454 he was at the school of St Martin in Groningen. In 1456 he matriculated at the University of Erfurt, then the most flourishing university in Germany. In 1465 'Rudolphus Agricola ex Baflo prope Groeningen' of the College of the Falcon took first place in the Master of Arts degree at Louvain,<sup>4</sup> where he had probably studied for seven years. Although in the arts course his principal studies would have been of Aristotelian logic and natural philosophy, his biographers report that he preferred reading Cicero and Quintilian. Perhaps it was at this time that he acquired his otherwise unlikely admiration for Duns Scotus. After 1465, Agricola may have begun to study law at Louvain, or he may have returned home, taking part in the discussions of the 'Aduard Academy'.<sup>5</sup> In any case, by 1469 he was in Italy, studying law at the University of Pavia, which attracted many Northern students.<sup>6</sup> Agricola seems to have played an active part in the life of the university, giving Latin orations at the installation of three Northern rectors, Matthaeus Richilius (1472), Paul de Baenst (1473) and Johann von Dalberg (1474). His *Oration on the life of Petrarch* was probably also delivered at Pavia. Agricola gave up his law studies to concentrate on reading Latin literature and improving his Latin style. At Pavia he lived with several other 'Germans', including Johannes Müller (Regiomontanus), Adolph Occo, Johann and Dietrich von Plieningen and Johann von Dalberg. His letters show that he gave private tuition in humanistic studies to the last three. On at least one occasion he interrupted his study in Pavia to return North, staying with his father in Selwerd during the winter of 1470-71.

In 1475 Agricola moved to Ferrara, probably in order to learn Greek. Giorgio Valla was employed to teach that language at Pavia in the early

<sup>3</sup> On the Frisian background especially useful are the lives by Gerard Geldenhouwer (*Noviomagus*) in J. Fichardus, *Virorum qui superiori nostroque seculo eruditione et doctrina illustres atque memorabiles fuerunt vitae* (Frankfurt, 1536), pp. 83<sup>r</sup>-87<sup>r</sup>, and Goswin van Halen, in J. B. Kan, 'Wesseli Groningensis, Rodolphi Agricolae, Erasmi Roterodami Vitae...', *Erasmiani Gymnasii programma Litterarum* (Rotterdam, 1894), p. 4ff., and F. J. Bakker's article in *RAP*, pp. 99-111. I am grateful to Mr. Bakker for allowing me to see a copy of his paper in advance of publication.

<sup>4</sup> Jos. Wils, *Matricule de l'université de Louvain* (Brussels 1946), p. 181. Geldenhouwer, p. 83<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> On which, P. S. Allen, *The Age of Erasmus* (Oxford, 1914), ch. 1, F. Akkerman, C. G. Santing, 'Rudolph Agricola en de Aduarder academie', *Groningse Volksalmanak*, 1987, pp. 7-28.

<sup>6</sup> For Agricola's time in Pavia, the letters, the biography by Johann von Plieningen in F. Pfeifer, 'Rudolph Agricola', *Serapeum*, 10 (1849), pp. 97-107, 113-119, hereafter Johann, and the researches of A. Sottili (*RAP*, pp. 79-95, 341) are especially helpful.

1470s, but his teaching may have been unsatisfactory, or the greater fame of Ferrara as a centre of Greek studies may have attracted Agricola. At first he seems to have regretted the move, missing his fellow northerners from Pavia, particularly the von Plienengens. For a time Agricola was employed by Count Ercole I d'Este as an organist. The von Plienengens and his half-brother Johann were living with him in Ferrara by 1476, when Agricola gave the *Oration in Praise of Philosophy* to inaugurate the university year.<sup>7</sup> While he was in Ferrara Agricola made several translations from the Greek, some for practice, some to provide Latin reading or rhetorical training for his pupils. He also copied and emended texts of Tacitus and the letters of the younger Pliny.<sup>8</sup> In Ferrara he became acquainted with Battista Guarino, Guarino Guarini's son, and Ermolao Barbaro. Presumably he also used the fine library that had been built up by Guarino and the d'Este family. Guarino's copies of Valla's works, including *Repastinatio dialecticae et philosophiae*, were probably available to him. He so valued the progress of his Greek studies that in 1477 he refused the offer of the newly founded chair of poetics at Louvain in order to remain in Ferrara.

After Dietrich von Plieningen took his law degree, Agricola travelled back to Germany with him. They spent much of the summer in Dillingen, where Agricola completed *De inventione dialectica*. He would have liked to remain, to copy a manuscript of Homer for his Greek studies, but the need to repay a debt forced him to return North.<sup>9</sup> He left his working manuscript of *De inventione dialectica* in Dillingen with Dietrich, who made the fair copy which was sent to Adolph Occo.

Agricola spent much more time in Italy than other northern humanists of his generation. He was also fortunate to be in Ferrara at a time when it was close to its peak as an intellectual and cultural centre. That he was employed as a musician by Ercole and that he delivered the inaugural oration of the academic year 1476 indicate that he held a considerable position within the city. But it would be wrong to think of Agricola as essentially a purveyor of Italian ideas. He was twenty-five when he first went to Italy. He had already completed a thorough training in Aristotelian logic and philosophy. In Italy he spent most of his time with fellow-northerners, many of them wealthy and influential, who looked up to him

<sup>7</sup> *Lucubrationes* (1539), pp. 144-159.

<sup>8</sup> Jos. M. M. Hermans, 'Rudolph Agricola and his books', *RAP*, pp. 123-135, F. Römer, 'Agricolae Arbeit am Text des Tacitus und des Jüngeren Plinius', *RAP*, pp. 158-169.

<sup>9</sup> *Briefe*, p. 18.

as a scholar and teacher. While he continued his studies he was already famous in the North. Throughout his life, as he himself observed, he returned to the status of a beginner, with Latin, with Greek, and in his last years in Heidelberg with Hebrew.<sup>10</sup> Even in his late thirties he knew that he wanted to spend his old age studying sacred letters, and he understood the skills he would have to acquire in order to do so.<sup>11</sup> For him study came first, as an end in itself. Beyond that he cultivated a communal life with a small group of friends, such as his fellow northerners in Italy, whose studies he could guide, and with whom he could share his discoveries. This way of life, quite different from the career pattern of an Italian humanist, is the context of *De inventione dialectica*, a book which rethinks the classical heritage of persuasion in the light of a deep and careful reading of Latin literature. As Agricola points out, his book covers the material of a textbook but can only really be appreciated by someone who is already well read.<sup>12</sup>

*De inventione dialectica* is an original and under-rated work. It is a textbook on writing, reading and thinking, and also a record of its author's reflections on his reading. In this book I describe *De inventione dialectica* as a whole, largely on its own terms, as a course in dialectical invention. Other themes will occur in the course of the analysis (Agricola's philosophical attitude, his literary criticism, his method of teaching, his relation to his possible sources), but I am most concerned to discuss the whole range of the work's teaching and to assess its contribution to the arts of language.

Agricola's work is concerned with dialectical invention. His own indications as to the scope of this phrase are mainly negative. It is not about rhetoric, which he restricts to questions of style, and within dialectic it is not about judgement (which describes in detail the proposition and the valid forms of argumentation). More positively it is about how to think about what to say: how to find convincing material, how to organise it in order to teach, move, and please an audience. It is about the creative part of using dialectic (allowing that judgement is largely a question of maintaining correct forms and classifications), which Agricola regards as the creative part of the language arts (after linguistic competence is achieved, but

---

<sup>10</sup> *Lucubrations* (1539), pp. 180, 185-186, 200, *Briefe*, p. 28.

<sup>11</sup> *Briefe*, p. 18

<sup>12</sup> R. Agricola, *De inventione dialectica*, with Alardus's commentary (Cologne, 1539, reprinted Nieuwkoop, 1967, Frankfurt, 1967), hereafter *DID*, b1<sup>v</sup> (bound after p. 16).

before the ornaments are put on).<sup>13</sup>

Agricola's plan for the work is straightforward but original. Book one is concerned with the topics, book two with the subject-matter, instrument, and treatment of dialectic (that is, with the question, the language (*oratio*), and training respectively), and book three with moving, pleasing and disposition. The thoroughness with which this plan is carried out is indicated in the outline below, in which the chapter numbers are those of Alardus's edition, which I shall be using throughout.<sup>14</sup>

Table 1 The Scheme of *De inventione dialectica*

Section		Chapter Nos.
Book 1		
A	Introduction	1
B	The Topics	
	Introduction to the Topics	2-4
	The Topics	5-19,21-27
	Discussion of other treatments of them	20,28,29
Book 2		
A	Introductory	
	The deficiency of contemporary dialectic	1
	What is dialectic?	2-3
	Teaching, moving and pleasing	4-5
B	Matter	
	The nature of the question	6-8
	Divisions of the question	8-11

<sup>13</sup> See chapter 8 below.

<sup>14</sup> See note 12 above. There is also a reprint (Hildesheim, 1976) of the Cologne 1528 edition, which contains Phrissemius's commentary. G. C. Huisman, *Rudolph Agricola: A Bibliography* (Nieuwkoop, 1985). See also chapters 13 and 14 below. It is always claimed that Alardus's is the best text but Phrissemius's is quite usable, although there seem to be more mistakes in the last few chapters. Unfortunately some of the chapter numberings and divisions vary in different editorial traditions. Studies: A. Faust, 'Die Dialektik Rudolf Agricolas', *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*, 34 (1922), pp. 118-135, P. Joachimsen, 'Loci communes', *Gesammelte Afsätze*, (Aalen, 1970), pp. 76-98, 393-412. C. Vasoli, *La dialettica e la retorica dell'umanesimo* (Milan, 1968), pp. 166-182, L. Jardine, *Francis Bacon* (Cambridge, 1974), pp. 29-35. Also various contributions to *RAP*. Translations of selected chapters: J. R. McNally, *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 34 (1967), pp. 393-422, M. Van der Poel ed., *Rudolf Agricola: Over dialectica en humanisme* (Baarn, 1991).

	The chief question and its dependents	12-14
C	Instrument	
	Kinds of language use	15-17
	Argumentation	18-21
	Exposition	22-23
	The parts of the oration	24
	The Topics belong to dialectic	25
D	Treatment	
	Knowing the Topics and using them	26-30
	Book 3	
A	Moving	
	The handling of emotions	1-3
B	Pleasing	
	Pleasing and digression	4
	Copia and brevity	5-7
C	Disposition	
	Overall disposition	8-11
	Arranging questions and arguments	12-15
	Exercises, reading and conclusion	16

Apart from the introductory material, which explains the purpose of the book and discusses controversial issues, the work follows a straightforward plan: topics; matter, instrument, treatment; moving, pleasing and disposition. This plan is unlike that of any previous rhetoric or dialectic. Agricola has selected materials from the traditional contents of both subjects. For example, the section on the topics (1B above) is developed from the versions of Quintilian, Cicero, Boethius and Aristotle. The discussion of dialectic (2A) is largely original but draws on Aristotle's *Topica* and Cicero's *Partitiones oratoriae*. The section on the question (2B) draws on Boethius, Aristotle, the rhetoric manuals and original material. The discussion of emotion (3A) uses Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, *De oratore* and *Institutio oratoria*. The treatment of disposition (3C) is developed from materials in *Categories*, *Posterior Analytics*, *Institutio oratoria* and *Rhetorica ad Herennium*. Agricola has organised this material into a relatively simple sequence. Table 2 below lists the main contents of the standard courses in rhetoric and dialectic (as represented by *Rhetorica ad Herennium* and the sequence of the *Organon* or Peter of Spain's *Tractatus*).

Table 2 The courses in rhetoric and dialectic compared with the contents of *De inventione dialectica*.

Rhetoric	<i>DID</i>	Dialectic	<i>DID</i>
Invention:		Predicables	1B
<i>Exordium</i>	2C 3C	Categories:	
Narration rules	2C	Substance	1B
Status theory	1B	Quantity	
Special Topics (General Topics)	1B	Relatives	
Forms of Argumentation	2C	Quality	1B
Refutation	2C	Post-predicaments	3C
Amplification	3AB	Proposition:	
Appeals	3A	Quantity	2B
Humour		Quality	2B
Disposition		Contraries	1B
Varying 4 part form	3C	Modals	2B
Argument order	3C	Syllogism:	
Deliberative speech		Figures	2C
Epideictic speech		Moods	2C
Style:		Advice	2C
3 Kinds		Topics:	
Qualities		Forms of Argumentation	2C
Tropes		Maxims and Differences	
Figures		List of Topics	1B
Memory		Definition	1B
Delivery		Division	1B
		Sophisms:	
		Kinds	
		Strategy	

The cross-references (keyed to the book, and left hand column of table 1) show that Agricola has drawn his material widely from the doctrines of both subjects. Within rhetoric he pays most attention to invention and disposition. What he has to say about style emerges more from the individual topics entries and the section on amplification (3B) than from using the rhetoric manual. Agricola says more about moving and pleasing (3AB) than the standard rhetoric manuals. The topics are the core of Agricola's dialectic but he draws on many other sections of the manual in

passing.

When table 1 is compared with table 2 it is immediately clear that Agricola's structure is quite unlike the traditional organisation of either subject. It is not a question of altering or adding to an existing structure (as it was with Valla); Agricola's plan is entirely new.<sup>15</sup>

It remains to demonstrate its unity (table 1). This can be considered in two ways. In one way the topics are the core of the book, and book two deals with preparing material for topical invention (the matter: the question), different linguistic ways of teaching material obtained from the topics (the instrument: exposition and argumentation), and the practical use of the topics (the treatment: drills and practice). On this reading, book three extends the use of the topics into other functions of language and explains how to arrange the material found by invention.

From another point of view one might say that the book is constructed around the three tasks of the orator: to teach (books 1 and 2), to move (first part of book 3) and to please (second part of book three).<sup>16</sup> Agricola introduces this familiar rhetorical doctrine in the first paragraph of his book, but even then he gives it a distinctive twist.

Every discourse on whatever subject, and indeed all language by which we reveal our thoughts, is undertaken for the purpose of teaching something to the person listening, and it seems to have this as its first and proper function ... I am aware that great authorities have established three characteristics of perfect discourse: to teach, to please and to move ... but I shall consider this in more detail later. For the moment it is enough to say that discourse can teach without pleasing and moving, but it cannot move or please without teaching.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup> As contributing factors one might mention *Partitiones oratoriae* which puts the topics first, *Topica* which suggests the division of dialectic into invention and judgement, and the two triads: teaching, moving, pleasing (see note 16) and *materia, instrumentum, tractatus*.

<sup>16</sup> The three tasks of the orator are found at: *Orator*, 69, *De oratore*, 2.27.115, 28.121, 29.128, 77.310, *Brutus*, 49.185 (in the form *docere, movere, delectare* only in the last), *Institutio oratoria*, 3.5.2, 8. Praef.7 and St. Augustine, *De doctrina Christiana*, 4.12.27-28. For the controversy on the differences in meaning of Cicero's different formulations see E. Fantham, 'Ciceronian *Conciliare* and Aristotelian *Ethos*', *Phoenix*, 27 (1973), pp. 262-275, L. Calboli Montefusco, 'Cicero and the Peripatos', *Rutgers University Studies in Classical Humanities*, 6 (forthcoming), J. Monfasani, 'Lorenzo Valla and Rudolph Agricola', *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 28 (1990), pp. 181-199 (184-187). The phrase 'officia oratoris' has other uses in classical Latin, notably in *Rhetorica ad Herennium* where at 1.3.4 it refers to the five skills of the orator, at 1.2.2 to the orator's purpose. At 1.2.3 it is hard to say which of these meanings is implied.

<sup>17</sup> *DID*, p. 1: 'Oratio quaecunque de re quaque instituitur, omnisque adeo sermo quo cogitata mentis nostrae proferimus, id agere, hocque primum et proprium habere videtur officium, ut doceat aliquid eum qui audit... Nec me praeterit maximis autorum placuisse tria esse quae perfecta oratione fiant, ut doceat, ut moveat, ut delectet... sed de his alio loco

For him these three tasks are not so much attributes of the orator as functions which all language aims at. At this stage he gives primacy to teaching, which is the distinctive task of dialectic. In associating dialectic with teaching, he is following St Bonaventure and Lorenzo Valla, as Monfasani has shown.<sup>18</sup> But when, later in the book, dialectic has become identified with topical invention, and topical invention has turned out to extend first to moving and later to pleasing, dialectic inevitably takes over responsibility for all three functions. Thus, although Agricola takes over from rhetoric the structuring triad of teaching, moving and pleasing, his application of them to language generally and his arrogation of all three functions to dialectic are original.

Agricola adds to the reader's sense of the unity of the book by returning at key moments to certain controlling doctrines.<sup>19</sup> Many of the ideas which shape the whole work, the primacy of teaching over moving and pleasing, the distinction between exposition and argumentation, and the rationale of the topics, are presented together in the first chapter. The unity of the work is enhanced through the addition of connecting passages, summaries, cross-references, and running examples, and through the way Agricola explains the use of the material he is teaching.

The originality of Agricola's structure is matched by the original way in which he treats the content of individual sections, content which is generally worked up from traditional parts of rhetoric and dialectic manuals. In the chapters of this section, I shall begin by considering the main elements of the work in turn: the topics (chapter 7); dialectical invention (ch. 8); exposition and argumentation (ch. 9); moving, pleasing and disposition (ch. 10). Then I shall discuss the way Agricola demonstrates the use of dialectic (ch. 11) and the relation between his book and the traditions of rhetoric and dialectic (ch. 12).

After completing *De inventione dialectica* Agricola continued his journey north. He stopped briefly in Speyer to see Johann von Dalberg. They spent a day in the library but Agricola was disappointed to find no

---

explicatus dicendum erit. Hoc in praesentia dixisse sufficiat: posse docere orationem ut non moveat, non delectet; movere aut delectare, ut non doceat, non posse.' The identification of teaching with dialectic is confirmed near the beginning of book two, *DID*, p. 196: 'erit nimurum dialectices finis, probabiliter de re proposita dicere, quando huic soli rei est instituta. Id scilicet est quod initio dixi, docere aliquid eum qui audit.'

<sup>18</sup> Monfasani, 'Lorenzo Valla', p. 185.

<sup>19</sup> For example, teaching, moving and pleasing turn up at *DID*, pp. 1, 192, 197, 205, 377, 394, 409.

Greek books and nothing about eloquence.<sup>20</sup> Perhaps it was in 1479-1480 that Agricola gave some tuition in Emmerich to Alexander Hegius, who afterwards referred to him as his teacher.<sup>21</sup> Agricola's first surviving letter from Groningen (of 3 April 1480) thanks Frederick Moorman for a poem celebrating Agricola's return to the North.<sup>22</sup> At this time too Agricola probably renewed his acquaintance with members of the Aduard Academy: Wessel Gansfort, Wilhelm Frederici, Rudolph von Langen and others. In 1480, probably in late summer, Agricola was appointed *secretarius* of Groningen.<sup>23</sup> This involved him in a good deal of travelling on behalf of the town, particularly in connection with the protracted van Heukelom case. In one of his letters he writes of a difficult journey to Maximilian's court in 1481-82, six months of following the court around, being put off, and having to deal with dishonest people.<sup>24</sup> This job also gave him the opportunity to visit libraries and meet other learned men. In the autumn of 1482 he spent six weeks or more on a diversion from an official trip to visit Johann von Dalberg, who had just been made Bishop of Worms, in Heidelberg.

Maximilian's court also had its compensations. Agricola was glad to meet his very learned chancellor and to boast to Occo of having turned down the offer of the Latin tutorship to the imperial children. It was also while with the court in Antwerp in 1481 that he met Jacques Barbireau, a composer and choirmaster at Antwerp, with whom Agricola made music and read classical texts. As a result of their meeting Barbireau arranged for the town council at Antwerp to offer Agricola a salary to open a school there, but before the offer was confirmed, Agricola decided that he would prefer to accept Dalberg's offer to support him in Heidelberg. It was partly in compensation for this disappointment that Agricola wrote Barbireau the long letter, outlining a choice of studies and a method of studying, which became *De formando studio*, his second best known work.<sup>25</sup>

In the first part of the letter Agricola chooses philosophy for Barbireau's study, because he has the ability and because he does not require that his studies provide him with the means of making money. Agricola divides philosophy into two parts, both of which should be studied: natural, which

<sup>20</sup> K. Morneweg, *Johann von Dalberg* (Heidelberg, 1887), p. 51.

<sup>21</sup> *RAP*, pp. 9, 182.

<sup>22</sup> P. S. Allen, 'The Letters', pp. 316-317.

<sup>23</sup> On Agricola's duties as *secretarius*, F. J. Bakker, 'Roeloff Huusman secretarius der Stadt Groningen 1479/80-1484', *RAP*, pp. 99-111.

<sup>24</sup> *Lucubrationes* (1539), p. 183.

<sup>25</sup> *Lucubrationes* (1539), pp. 193-201.

includes geography, ethnology, biology, architecture and painting, and moral, the more important part, which includes history, poetry, oratory and sacred writings as well as ethics. He insists that one should always study the best authors and he asserts the value of translation into the vernacular as a means of improving one's knowledge of the subject-matter and of both languages.

In the second part Agricola sets out three aspects of the method of study. First what is read needs to be understood. This involves careful consideration of the force of particular words, ornaments and sentences in different authors. It also requires patience and persistence. Secondly what has been understood must be retained, by means of repetition and constant exercise of the memory. Thirdly, and most important of all, what has been learned should be held ready for use in one's own writing. Agricola suggests two methods: the use of the commonplace book, and the positive reading of texts, comparing the words an author uses with others which could have been chosen, and applying topical invention to the key words of the argument. This is the key to *copia* of language and invention. The letter asserts a broad view of practical philosophy underpinned by the use of the skills taught by the arts of language.

As a result of plague and political circumstances eighteen months elapsed between Agricola's decision to go to Heidelberg and his arrival there. In that time he seems to have reached more of an understanding with his employers in Groningen, who were hardly unkind to him even if they could not live up to his ideal. Once he arrived in Heidelberg he became very nostalgic about Groningen, making plans to return and speaking of his new life as a servitude. In point of fact his new duties were not onerous. He was supposed to help Dalberg with his studies, and he did a little teaching on the fringes of the university. Although the students were enthusiastic he found them ill-equipped for humanistic studies. At this period he gave an oration to the assembled clergy of Dalberg's diocese on the dignity of the priesthood, and another in honour of Christmas day 1484.<sup>26</sup> According to Melanchthon he also composed a world chronicle while in Heidelberg.<sup>27</sup> Dalberg provided a Hebrew teacher and some

<sup>26</sup> L. W. Spitz, A. Benjamin, 'Rudolph Agricola's *Exhortatio ad Clerum Wormatiensem*', *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, 54 (1963), pp. 1-15, *Lucubrationes* (1539), pp. 118-125.

<sup>27</sup> E. Kessler, 'Agricola und die Geschichte', *RAP*, pp. 58-78. I am still doubtful about this, because the only source for it is Melanchthon, writing over fifty years later and committed to magnifying Agricola's achievement. Also Agricola only lived in Heidelberg for a year. But Dr. Akkerman has no doubt that it existed.

Hebrew books for him, and Agricola was also in correspondance with Adolph Rusch in Strasbourg, and Johann von Plieningen in Rome, about classical texts he needed. He particularly asked Johann to send him Greek texts of Aristotle.<sup>28</sup>

The Elector Palatine's desire to send Dalberg to congratulate the new pope, Innocent VIII, gave Agricola the opportunity of making another trip to Italy. They travelled via Ferrara, from where Agricola wrote his brother a moving letter on the damage the city had suffered through war. In Rome he was pleased to see Johann von Plieningen, who was working for Giuliano della Rovere. He visited the ancient remains and probably met the learned men of the curia. Agricola wrote the oration Dalberg gave on behalf of the elector.<sup>29</sup>

On the return journey Agricola was taken ill at Trent, and he, along with two companions, had to be left behind while the others continued. In early September he had recovered sufficiently to continue the journey, but its length and difficulty assisted a resumption of his fever, and he was very ill when he arrived in Heidelberg. The fever led to a kidney disease, of which Agricola died on 27 October 1485, in Dalberg's arms, while awaiting the arrival of Adolph Occo. He was buried in a Franciscan habit in the Church of St Francis in Heidelberg. Johann Reuchlin gave the funeral oration, and Occo, Dalberg and Ermolao Barbaro provided epitaphs.<sup>30</sup>

Agricola's early biographers conclude their accounts of his life with miscellaneous information, some of which may be recorded. He was skilful in wrestling and liked to intersperse his studies with physical exertion, such as shotputting or throwing the javelin. He had a large beard, a prominent nose and rather a strident voice. He tended to bite his nails. His favourite books were Quintilian, the *Natural History* of the Elder Pliny and the *Letters* of the Younger, and a few select works of Plato and Cicero. This library was always with him but he left other books with his friends. He liked erudite jokes. One of his biographers records that he wrote vernacular love poetry to a woman named Anna, whom he called his fury.<sup>31</sup>

Agricola contributed to various genres. His Latin translations of Greek works, mostly done in Ferrara, were partly for his own use, partly gifts for

---

<sup>28</sup> *Lucubrationes* (1539), p. 200, Johann, pp. 104-105, *Briefe*, pp. 26, 29-31.

<sup>29</sup> Johann, p. 104, *Lucubrationes* (1539), p. 219, *Briefe*, pp. 18, 29, P. S. Allen, 'The Letters', p. 316, Van der Velden, pp. 246-249.

<sup>30</sup> Johann, p. 105, Van der Velden, pp. 254-256.

<sup>31</sup> Johann, p. 106, Geldenhouwer, pp. 84<sup>v</sup>-85<sup>t</sup>, Goswin, pp. 8-9.

patrons, and partly teaching aids. The best instance of the latter is his Latin translation of Aphthonius's *Progymnasmata*, a series of composition exercises,<sup>32</sup> which became one of the best-selling schoolbooks of the sixteenth century. His orations were written for ceremonial purposes or at the behest of patrons. For a Northerner to deliver Latin orations publicly in Italy was a distinctive achievement. His poems are regarded as competent rather than inspired, though competence in composing Latin poems was a rare enough commodity among northern humanists in the late fifteenth century.<sup>33</sup> He did not prepare his correspondence for posterity, but around fifty letters survive. They are all well crafted and interesting. The best qualified judge, their editor Fokke Akkerman, considers them carefully fictionalised and selected to project a particular humanist image,<sup>34</sup> but I think they also show mastery of a range of styles and a certain force of personality.

His educational works are the ones with the greatest afterlife: the *Commentary on Pro Lege Manilia*, *De formando studio*, the translation of Aphthonius's *Progymnasmata*, and *De inventione dialectica* were all in different ways crucial books for Northern humanism in the sixteenth century.<sup>35</sup>

---

<sup>32</sup> H. Rabe ed., *Aphthonii Progymnasmata*, in *Rhetores Graeci*, vol 10 (Leipzig, 1926), pp. 1-51, R. Nadeau, 'The Progymnasmata of Aphthonius in translation', *Speech Monographs*, 19 (1952), pp. 264-285. Editions of Agricola's Latin version are listed in G. C. Huisman, *Rudolph Agricola: A Bibliography...* (Nieuwkoop, 1985), pp. 135-187.

<sup>33</sup> P. Schoonbeeg 'Agricola alter Maro', *RA*, pp. 189-199.

<sup>34</sup> F. Akkerman, 'De Neolatijnse epistolografie', pp. 324-334.

<sup>35</sup> There is an excellent list of Agricola's works, compiled by Dr. Akkerman, in *RA*, pp. 313-327. However, on p. 318, he ought to have included the Uppsala ms. of *De inventione dialectica* and to have made it clear that item 2 is not a work by Agricola.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### AGRICOLA'S TOPICS

The topics are the core of *De inventione dialectica*.<sup>1</sup> Their purpose is the invention of material, principally arguments, for use in discussing a given subject. In one way the topics are a technique of verbal association. The speaker is assigned a particular subject or proposition (for example: the key point of dispute in a trial, the motion in a debate, or the name of a person to be praised). By applying a particular topic or heading (for example 'definition' or 'cause') to one of the key words of the assigned subject the speaker should be able to derive another word or concept. Thus by applying 'definition' to the key word 'philosopher' the speaker might arrive at 'man seeking a knowledge of human and divine things'. Running through the fixed succession of headings in relation to a particular key word produces a list of further words or ideas ('the topical description'). This topical description, which is an organised exploration of the nature of a subject, provides possible starting points for arguments.

In his section on the use of the topics Agricola works out a topical description of 'philosopher', which I summarize:

Definition	Man seeking knowledge of human and divine things, with virtue.
Genus	Man
Species	Stoic, Epicurean, Peripatetic, Academic etc.
Property	Desire of knowledge, with virtue.
Whole	Same as man (? part of the world).
Parts	Same as man (arms, legs).
Conjugates	Philosophy, to philosophize.

---

<sup>1</sup> Agricola and others refer to *DID* as his 'topics'. Hartfelder, 'Unedierte Briefe von Rudolf Agricola', *Festchrift der badische Gymnasien* (Karlsruhe, 1886), pp. 1-36, p. 19. Other references in chapter 14 below.

Adjacents	Paleness, leanness, shivering, wrinkled brow, strictness of life, uprightness of morals, love of toil, lack of concern for everyday affairs, contempt of pleasure and sorrow.
Actions	Studying, staying up late, working, always trying to do whatever will improve human life.
Efficient cause	Another philosopher, pains, devotion to study.
Final cause	To live well and peacefully.
Effects	Writings, improvement of morals, living better, fame.
<i>Destinata</i>	Everything produced by the cause of following philosophy.
<i>Connexa</i>	Some sort of wealth, fame, disciples, respect.
Place	Place of birth, of teaching.
Time	Young or old.

(The other topics are best used in a more specific case).<sup>2</sup>

The speaker can choose from this list subjects to investigate further, some of which may be useful in discussion or as part of an oration. Or items from the list can be used directly as the starting points for arguments. Or if there are two key words which the speaker wishes to connect through a syllogism or some other form of argumentation, he or she may compare the topical descriptions of both words with a view to using anything that occurs in both lists as a middle term.

Not all versions of the topics work exactly like this, or employ this list of headings, but they all aim to provide the speaker with a supply of material (and in most cases specifically arguments) for use in orations and disputations.

In this chapter I shall be concerned mainly with Agricola's topics. However, since the special features of his version can only be brought out by comparison, I shall also need to refer to other versions. Some of these comparisons will appear below in discussions of: the nature and use of the topics, the list of topics, and the contents of particular topics. This chapter begins with an outline of the development of the topics treatise, based on

---

<sup>2</sup> *DID*, p. 368. Topical description is discussed, pp. 352-366.

the three principal versions available in the Renaissance, those of Aristotle, Cicero and Boethius.

Aristotle's *Topica* interrupts the sequence of the *Organon*.<sup>3</sup> Whereas the treatises from *Categories* to *Posterior Analytics* provide a systematic account of demonstration, *Topica* gives an introduction to the tactics of practical argument. The first book is an introduction to dialectic, the eighth and final book a discussion of the roles played by questioner and answerer in a disputation. The intervening books contain 337 rules which are the topics.<sup>4</sup> *Topica* provides no definition of topic. *Rhetoric* defines it as a source of enthymemes.<sup>5</sup> The rules in *Topica* fall into two parts: an instruction about a point of view from which to consider a particular argument, and a rule, presumed to be necessarily true, from which one can argue for or against the argument.<sup>6</sup> In this example, taken from the topics under genus, the first sentence is the instruction, the second the rule.

See also whether the genus mentioned fails, or might be generally thought to fail, to apply to some object which is not specifically different from the thing in question; (or, if your argument be constructive, whether it does so apply). For all things that are not specifically different have the same genus.<sup>7</sup>

The strategy is essentially reactive, and largely restricted to the context of formal disputation. If the argument proposed involves genus, you should look into ways of denying the appropriateness of the genus suggested. The advice is helpful as a way of countering an argument with which you are faced (though how you are supposed to keep all 337 rules ready for use at any time is another question) but it is not much use if you are trying to find positive arguments in favour of an opinion or a particular course of action.

Cicero's version of the topics purports to be a summary of Aristotle's

<sup>3</sup> The collection and ordering of the *Organon* is the work of Andronicus of Rhodes who edited Aristotle's text, which had been damaged and neglected, in the first century BC. According to L. Minio-Paluello, the title *Organon* is a Renaissance invention.

<sup>4</sup> This count of the rules is cited by L. M. Regis, *L'Opinion selon Aristote* (Paris, 1935), p. 147, n. 1. A helpful analysis of Aristotle's *Topica* is in N. J. Green-Pedersen, *The Tradition of the Topics in the Middle Ages* (Munich, 1984), pp. 20-33.

<sup>5</sup> *Rhetoric*, 1403a18-19. Enthymemes are the imperfect syllogisms which, according to Aristotle, orators favour. Since the topics listed in *Rhetoric* are rather different from those in *Topica*, it is probably not acceptable to use *Rhetoric*'s definition of topic to repair the omission in *Topica*.

<sup>6</sup> W. A. de Pater, 'La Fonction du lieu et de l'instrument dans les *Topiques*', in G. E. L. Owen ed., *Aristotle on Dialectic* (Oxford, 1968), pp. 164-188, (164-166).

<sup>7</sup> *Topica*, 121b15-18. Translation by W. A. Pickard-Cambridge, now in J. Barnes ed., *The Complete Works of Aristotle* (Princeton, 1984).

*Topica*,<sup>8</sup> but it is sufficiently different that it must result from intermediate work, either on *Topica*, perhaps beginning with Theophrastus, or on the list of topics given in Aristotle's *Rhetic*.<sup>9</sup> Cicero's *Topica* in fact provides the system for generating positive arguments which previous Aristotelian logic lacks. In this form the topics can be applied beyond the formal disputation to other occasions for persuasion: the law court, the assembly, the newspaper article, the conversation.

Cicero defines the topics as the places where the arguments are found.<sup>10</sup> His versions of the topics treatise usually consist of a list of headings (e.g. definition, genus, similarity) attached to specimen arguments.<sup>11</sup> These examples come from the relatively full treatment in the first half of *Topica*.

It is drawn from genus like this. Since all the silver was left to the wife, the money which remained in the house must also have been left to her. The species is never divided from the genus, as long as it keeps its name. Money in the form of coin keeps the name of silver; therefore it seems to have been left to the wife.... (3.13)

From similarity in this way: if the building whose usufruct (use and benefit, as opposed to absolute possession) you have been left has fallen down or been damaged the heir is not obliged to restore or repair it, any more than he would have to replace a slave, if one, whose usufruct had been left, had died. (3.15)

In the first of these examples, a general rule ('the species is never divided from the genus, as long as it keeps its name') is provided along with the heading and the example. The argument is generated by applying the heading to the matter at issue. Thus, for example, in arguing about the bequest of the usufruct of a house, one may wish to consider similar kinds of bequest relating to different objects. In the second half of *Topica*, Cicero goes through his list of headings again, providing a more thorough definition of each, looking into their divisions and properties, and, on occasion, providing advice on how arguments drawn from particular topics might be used. Knowledge of the implications of the headings helps the reader look for arguments on any subject on which she has to speak.

<sup>8</sup> Cicero, *Topica*, 1.3-5; *Ad Familiares*, VII, 19.

<sup>9</sup> *Rhetic*, 1397a6-1400b25. S. Ebbesen, *CHLMP*, pp. 111-118, summarising his *Commentators and Commentaries on Aristotle's Sophistici Elenchi*, 3 vols. (Leiden, 1981), I, pp. 106-126. At some points in *Topica* one finds sequences of rules which could be starting points for later topics like contraries, relatives, conjugates, and comparisons: e.g. *Topica*, 112b1-115b10, 123a20-127b36. De Pater draws attention to a similar list, *Les Topiques d'Aristote* (Fribourg, 1965), pp. 170-204.

<sup>10</sup> Cicero, *Topica*, 2.7-8, *Partitiones oratoriae*, 2.5.

<sup>11</sup> *De oratore*, 2.39.162-41.176, *Orator*, 14.46-15.48, *Partitiones oratoriae*, 2.7-3.8.

Quintilian's version of the topics is in most respects an elaboration of Cicero's.<sup>12</sup> In places however it is fuller, and its approach is sometimes more pedagogic and more philological. Agricola sometimes follows it in preference to Cicero's.

Boethius treats the topics in his commentary *In Topica Ciceronis* and in the subsequent and better known treatise *De differentiis topicis*.<sup>13</sup> Boethius divides each topic into two parts: the topical maxim, which is a universally true statement which can be used as a major proposition to support a line of proof; and the topical difference, which is a *differentia* enabling the very large number of maxims to be divided into a manageable number of groups.

Whole is usually said in two ways, either as a genus, or as the integral whole made up of several parts. That which is a whole as genus often supplies arguments to questions in this way. For instance, if the question should be 'is justice useful?', the syllogism would be: every virtue is useful; justice is a virtue; therefore justice is useful. This question concerns accidents, that is, is usefulness an accident of justice? The topic is what forms the maximal proposition: what is present to the genus is present to the species...

Again an argument from the greater: if the question is: 'is 'capable of moving itself' a definition of animal?', we should argue like this: 'naturally living' is a more fitting definition of animal than 'capable of moving itself'; but 'naturally living' is not a definition of animal; therefore neither is 'capable of moving itself', which is a less likely definition. The maximal proposition: if what appears more likely to belong does not belong, nor will what seems less likely to belong. The topic is from the greater.<sup>14</sup>

The way Boethius sets out each topic entry indicates that he thinks of the topical difference (e.g. 'genus', 'greater', 'definition') as the topic, while the maxim is a universally true proposition which can be used to support the syllogisms he is constructing. Their wording suggests that most of his

---

<sup>12</sup> *Institutio oratoria*, 5.10.54-94.

<sup>13</sup> *PL* 64, 1039-1216.

<sup>14</sup> *PL* 64, 1188B: 'Totum duobus modis dici solet, aut ut genus, aut ut id quod integrum ex pluribus partibus constat. Et illud quidem quod ut genus totum est, hoc modo saepe quaestionibus argumenta suppeditat, ut si sit quaestio an iustitia utilis sit, fit syllogismus: omnis virtus utilis est, iustitia virtus est, iustitia igitur utilis est. Hic est quaestio de accidenti, id est an accidat iustitiae utilitas. Locus est is qui in maxima propositione consistit: quae generi adsunt speciei adsunt.' *PL* 64, 1190D-1191A: 'Rursus ab eo quod est magis: si quaeratur an sit animalis diffinitio, quod ex se moveri possit, dicemus sic: magis oportet animalis diffinitionem esse quod naturaliter vivat quam quod ex se moveri possit; non est autem haec diffinitionem animalis quod naturaliter vivat; nec ea quidem igitur quae minus videtur esse, quod ex se moveri possit, animalis diffinitio putanda est. Quaestio de diffinitione. Maxima propositio; si id quod magis videtur inesse non inest, nec id quod minus videbitur inesse inerit. Locus ab eo quod magis est.'

maxims are constructed out of the *differentiae*, though there are examples of rules from Aristotle's *Topica* which appear as maxims in Boethius.<sup>15</sup> Boethius attributes the list of topical differences he prefers in *De differentiis topicis* to Themistius, an Aristotelian philosopher of the fourth century AD, but the list is sufficiently similar to Cicero's for them to have derived from the same tradition. The crucial difference between Cicero and Boethius is that Boethius draws attention to his rules, and makes them central, by calling them maxims and likening them to axioms. Green-Pedersen has shown that Aristotle's *Topica* was neglected in the Middle Ages. Boethius's *De differentiis topicis* was used instead. Peter of Spain based the topics treatise in his *Tractatus*, which was very widely used as an introduction to logic, on Boethius.<sup>16</sup> He was followed in this by most renaissance introductions to logic (including humanist ones). *De differentiis topicis* itself, however, was not printed very often in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.<sup>17</sup>

The word τόπος, *locus*, topic also has other uses in connection with the arts of language. Rhetoricians speak of topics of person and thing. These are a list of headings (e.g. birth, education, profession, deeds) which suggest material one might wish to investigate or use when speaking about a person or thing. Since these topics can be derived from the general topics, and since they are particularly applied to a person or a thing, I call them special topics. The word *locus* (topic) also occurs in the phrase *locus communis* (commonplace). Commonplaces are prepared disquisitions on particular subjects (e.g. loss, misfortune, wickedness) which an orator may insert in his speech at an appropriate moment.<sup>18</sup> Finally, the term *locus* is

<sup>15</sup> *Topica*, 115a6 ('if one predicate is attributed to two subjects then supposing it does not belong to the subject to which it is more likely to belong then neither does it belong where it is less likely to belong') is similar to the second example in n. 14 above, except that the maxim in the latter reverses subject and predicate which may weaken it. Most of Boethius's maxims look like back-formations from their *differentiae*.

<sup>16</sup> Green-Pedersen, *The Tradition of the Topics*, pp. 39, 86-87, 107, 123, 163, 337. Other works on the development of the topics: E. Stump, *Boethius's De topicis differentiis* (Ithaca, 1978), which contains essays on the subject, O. Bird, 'The Formalizing of the Topics in Mediaeval Logic', *Notre Dame Journal of Formal Logic*, 61 (1960), pp. 138-149, 'The Tradition of the Logical Topics: Aristotle to Ockham', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 23 (1962), pp. 307-323, J. Pinborg, 'Topik und Syllogistik im Mittelalter', in F. Hoffman et al. eds., *Sapienter ordinare. Festgabe für Erich Kleineidam* (Leipzig, 1969), pp. 151-178.

<sup>17</sup> By combining Risse's *Bibliographia Logica* with the Bodleian catalogue and Paul Morgan's catalogue of Oxford College libraries I found a total of 6 sixteenth century editions of *De differentiis topicis*, five of them from Paris between 1534 and 1542. The text would also have been available in five Venice editions of Boethius's *Dialectica* and four editions of his *Opera*. See my thesis, p. 323.

<sup>18</sup> L. Pernot, 'Lieu et lieu commun dans la rhétorique antique', *Bulletin de l'Association*

also used for the places in the background in an artificial memory system in which one mentally places the objects symbolising the things one wishes to remember.<sup>19</sup> However this group of senses arose, they were sufficiently well established by the time of Cicero for there to be no danger of confusion between them.<sup>20</sup>

*The Nature and Use of the Topics*

Near the beginning of *De inventione dialectica*, Agricola compares previous versions of the topics with his own. They are hard to understand, because they leave out essential features, or because they are too complicated, too brief, or too restricted. He will be plainer and fuller, less subtle and more open (14-18). Agricola tried very hard to make clear things about the nature of the topics and the way they are used which his predecessors had left implicit.

The best hint which Cicero's *Topica* gives us about the nature of the topics is in a comparison.

Just as it is easy to find things that have been hidden when a place is pointed out and marked, so when we wish to investigate any argument we should know the topics.<sup>21</sup>

The implication here is that the topics are a set of labelled spaces, like the divisions in a filing system, or like the backgrounds in a memory system. When Cicero later explains that although we need to know the whole list only a few of them will help us on any given occasion,<sup>22</sup> he may imply that one will find suitable arguments by running through all the headings in one's mind selecting some and rejecting others. This certainly seems to be the method of using the topics implied in the following extract, from the

---

Guillaume Budé, sér 4, 1986, pp. 253-84.

<sup>19</sup> F. A. Yates, *The Art of Memory* (London, 1969), 'The Ciceronian Art of Memory', in *Medioevo e Rinascimento, Studi in onore di Bruni Nardi* (Florence, 1955), II, pp. 871-903.

<sup>20</sup> Near the end of his review of the corruption of modern logic, Agricola speaks of the acuteness and intelligence of the Art of Ramon Lull (c.1235-1316), which is marred only by the obscurity of its presentation (*DID*, 181-182). He points out that his own topics are different from Lull's, but the passage indicates that Agricola had read Lull, and raises the possibility that Lull's Art, which aims to unify the other arts, was in some way an inspiration to Agricola. I am unable to suggest detailed points of contact, but it should be recalled that both Lull and Agricola were, in different ways, extreme realists in metaphysics. The literature on Lull is very extensive. It may be approached through F. A. Yates, 'The Art Of Ramon Lull', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 27 (1964), pp. 115-173, reprinted in her *Collected Essays I: Lull and Bruno* (London, 1982), and J. N. Hillgarth, *Raymond Lull and Lullism in Fourteenth Century France* (Oxford, 1972).

<sup>21</sup> *Topica*, 2.7.

<sup>22</sup> *Topica*, 29.79.

brief survey of invention Cicero gives in *Orator* before moving on to the questions of style which are the main concerns of that work.

[Aristotle] also taught the topics - so he called them - certain indications of arguments from which a whole oration on each of the two sides of a question can be drawn. Therefore our orator...since certain topics have been handed down, will run through them all, use those which are suitable, and speak of each in turn. The topics are also the sources of what we call the commonplaces. But the orator will not use this supply of arguments unwisely, instead he will weigh everything and select. For the decisive arguments are not always to be found in the same topics. Therefore he will use his judgement and will not only invent what he is going to say, but will also weigh up each argument carefully. Nothing is more productive than the mind, especially if it has been improved with learning. But, just as fruitful and fertile fields produce not only crops but also weeds which harm those crops, so sometimes inconsequential, irrelevant or useless arguments are obtained from these topics. Unless the judgement of the orator makes a careful selection of these, how will he be able to stick to and dwell on his strong points, or make the difficulties seem light, or hide what cannot be explained away, and if possible suppress it altogether, or distract the minds of the audience, or bring up something else which, when interposed, will seem more likely than the thing which hinders his case?<sup>23</sup>

Here it is clearly implied that while the speaker may consult all the topics, he or she will need to make a judgement about which of the arguments to use (since they are most favourable), and which to prepare defences against (since they help the opponent).

When Boethius says

The intention of the topics is to provide an abundant supply of probable arguments. For once topics have been marked out (*designatis locis*) from which probable arguments may be obtained, it is inevitable that the material for discoursing should become full and copious.<sup>24</sup>

he too is probably assuming that the speaker runs through the topics trying to find possible arguments corresponding to each. This seems the safest assumption, but Boethius says very little about how the topics are used in invention. Like Cicero, he does not set out a particular sequence of steps to follow.

Boethius does discuss the way the maxims contribute to arguments. Any argument, he says, following Cicero, creates belief concerning something

<sup>23</sup> *Orator*, 14.46-15.49. Quintilian warns of the danger of using only the technique of running through the headings, but he too endorses it. *Institutio oratoria*, 5.10.100-110, 119-125.

<sup>24</sup> *PL* 64, 1182A: 'Topicorum intentio est verisimilium argumentorum copiam demonstrare. Designatis enim locis ex quibus probabilia argumenta ducuntur, abundans et copiosa necesse est fiat materia disserendi.' Compare 1048A.

which is in doubt. In that case the argument must be better known and more likely than the thing it seeks to prove. This means that the maxims, which are known to be true on their own account, provide credibility to all arguments.<sup>25</sup> Sometimes the maxim is placed within the argument, as in

1. When a kingship is good, it lasts longer than a consulate.
2. Whatever good thing lasts longer is better than something good of shorter duration.
3. Therefore kingship is better than a consulate.

In this case proposition 2 is the maxim. Sometimes the maxim supports the argument from outside, as in

4. Whoever is sad at the happiness of another is jealous.
5. The wise man is not sad at the happiness of another.
6. Therefore the jealous man is not a wise man.<sup>26</sup>

According to Boethius the proof in this case is founded on the unstated maxim 7: 'it is necessary that the substances whose definitions are different, are different'.<sup>27</sup> One might quarrel with both these arguments. Maxim 2 is at best likely, whereas propositions 4 and 5 are not definitions in any strict sense of the word. It appears that whatever argumentative force the conclusions have depends more on the strength of the premisses and on syllogistic form than on the maxims.

His examples show that Boethius associates the maxim with support for the syllogism and that the maxim itself is a general statement whose force comes from outside the argument in question (either from definition or from shared expectation).

Agricola explains how the topics are used in chapters 26-30 of book two. First he describes topical reading. The student will analyse the arguments found in the best authors, reconstructing the argumentative structures implied, and labelling the topical relationships underlying them. This provides insight into the methods of the authors, as well as developing familiarity with the topics and their uses. Then he gives instructions for topical description (as set out at the beginning of this chapter) and for comparing and combining the topical descriptions of two things which have to be connected in order to make a case.

His theoretical discussion of the topics appears in the first two chapters of book one. In the first chapter his main purpose is to impress his

---

<sup>25</sup> *PL* 64, 1048C, 1051D, 1185A-B.

<sup>26</sup> *PL* 64, 1051D-1052A, 1185B-D.

<sup>27</sup> *PL* 64, 1052A, 1085D: 'quorum diversae sunt definitiones, diversas esse substantias necesse est.'

audience with the usefulness of the topics. We need arguments for many purposes, and especially for discussing the many things which have not been firmly established. The topics help us find arguments. They are also a training in thinking, 'since prudence itself seems to consist in knowing the nature of something, and collecting what agrees and disagrees with it, what it causes and what might happen'.<sup>28</sup> Hence

Those who devised certain seats of arguments which they call topics seem to have done a most useful thing, for by the prompting of the topics, as if by certain signs, we are enabled to turn our minds around the things themselves and perceive whatever in each of them is convincing and suitable for what our speech sets out to teach.<sup>29</sup>

In this description the topics act as a remembered group of signs, pointing the mind to speculations about particular things which may turn out to fit in with what we want to say. While the speculations will be regulated by the speaker's intention, and will spring from the matter in hand, the topics will provide a fixed and supposedly complete list of manoeuvres for the mind to attempt.

In chapter two Agricola explains why the topics function as they do, and then works towards a definition of topic. In order to prove something which is in doubt, it is necessary to adduce something from outside which is not in doubt. But whatever is adduced must be related to the proposition in need of proof. Agricola illustrates the idea of bringing in something better known with an analogy from measuring. If someone wishes to determine whether two objects which cannot be placed side by side are the same size, he or she will take a portable object which is the same size as one of them and compare that with the other. In the same way, in determining whether or not two things agree with each other, it is necessary to find a third thing which agrees with one and can be compared with both. This will be the medium of argumentation, which is also called the argument, since it causes belief (7-8).

This analogy is not appropriate to all the topics, since it assumes that the relationship denoted by 'agrees' will always be transferable to some third term, but it suggests that for Agricola an argument depends on a relation

---

<sup>28</sup> *DID*, p. 3: 'Quando non alia re prudentiam constare appetet quam perspicere quid in quaeque re sit positum, et consentanea repugnantiaque, et quo quicque ducat, quidve evenire possit colligere.'

<sup>29</sup> *DID*, p. 2: 'Utilissimum videntur fecisse, qui sedes quasdam argumentorum (quos locos dixerunt) excogitavere, quorum admonitu velut signis quibusdam circunferremus per ipsas res animum, et quid esset in unaquaque probabile aptumque instituto orationis nostrae perspiceremus.' For the translation 'convincing' see discussion in chapter 8.

holding between the medium and each of the outer terms.

All the things which are said either for or against something fit together and are, so to speak, joined with it by a certain community of nature. Now there are very many things and consequently an immense number of connections and disagreements among them. From this it follows that no discourse and no power of the human mind can comprehend individually all the relations in which individuals agree and differ. However a certain common condition (*habitudo*) is present in all things (even though they are different in their appearances), and they all tend to a similarity of nature. So, for example, every thing has a certain substance of its own, certain causes it arises from, certain effects it produces. And so the cleverest men have chosen, out of that vast variety of things these common headings: such as substance, cause, effect and the others which we shall speak of shortly. As if following these things, when we alert our mind to consider any given subject, at once we shall go through the whole nature of the thing and its parts, and through all the things which are consistent or incompatible with it, and we shall draw from there an argument apposite to the subject proposed. These common headings, just as they contain within themselves everything that can be said about any subject, so also they contain all the arguments; for this reason they are called topics, because in them are placed, as if in a refuge or a sort of treasury, all instruments for causing belief. Therefore a topic is nothing other than a certain common mark of a thing by whose prompting whatever may be believable about a given thing can be found.<sup>30</sup>

This definition seems to result from a convergence of two ideas. The arguer needs to discover connections between the terms of propositions; the things in the world need to have a common way of being related. Agricola keeps in mind Cicero's picture of the spaces marked and labelled, but he makes the more sweeping claim that there are similar connections really existing in the world. All that can be said about something, and all that

---

<sup>30</sup> *DID*, p. 9: '[proposuimus] omnia quae vel pro re quaque vel contra dicuntur cohaerere et esse cum ea quadam (ut ita dicam) naturae societate coniuncta. Res autem numero sunt immenses, et proinde immensa quoque proprietas atque diversitas earum. Quo fit ut omnia quae singulis convenient aut discrepant singulatim nulla oratio, nulla vis mentis humanae possit complecti. Inest tamen omnibus (tametsi suis quaeque discreta sint notis) communis quaedam habitudo, et cuncta ad naturae tendunt similitudinem, ut quod est omnibus substantia quaedam sua, omnia ex aliquibus oriuntur causis, omnia aliiquid efficiunt. Ingeniosissimi itaque virorum, ex effusa illa rerum varietate, communia ista capita, velut substantiam, causam, eventum, quaeque reliqua mox dicemus, excerpere. Velut cum ad considerandam rem quampiam animum advertissemus, sequentes ista statim per omnem rei naturam et partes, perque omnia consentanea et dissidentia iremus, et duceremus inde argumentum propositis rebus accommodatum. Haec igitur communia, quia perinde ut quicquid dici illa de re potest, ita argumenta omnia intra se continent. Idcirco locos vocaverunt, quod in eis velut receptu et thesauro quodam omnia facienda fidei instrumenta sint deposita. Non ergo aliud est locus quam communis quaedam rei nota, cuius admonitu quid in quaque re probabile sit potest inveniri.'

something is, is to emerge from consideration of the topics. This is a strong claim to make and, if it is found convincing, it provides an explanation for the ways in which the topics are to be used for discovering material and for thinking.

The implication that the connections named by the topics exist in the world appears to suit some topics (such as causes) better than others (such as similitudes). Braakhuis has argued that the passage quoted above is consistent with (and perhaps depends on) Agricola's realist view about universals. In his *Questions on Universals* Agricola states that 'man' is something which exists in the world, but which exists in a different way from individual men. Thus Socrates and Plato are both examples of 'man', but both also have special properties which make them different from 'man' and from each other.<sup>31</sup> In his discussion of the universals, Agricola places his view in relation to the alternatives offered by the scholastic tradition, but it could also be connected with Valla's attitude, in which the distinctions made by language exactly reflect distinctions in the world.<sup>32</sup> Agricola has done more than any previous writer to explain why the topics help us find useful arguments, but his explanation of the force of the topics is not logically watertight. One aspect of the discussion which is awkward is the truth status of the arguments being described. The topics are supposed to generate plausible arguments as well as necessary ones, but Agricola's discussion of the topics often slips into talking as though all arguments have the force of certainty. This comment applies to Agricola's analogy from measuring (7-8) and also to his remarks on the connection between the thing you want to prove and the thing you bring in to prove it.

It ought to be joined by some reason and almost related to that thing which it is brought in to prove, such that it should seem if you are affirming that the thing in question cannot exist without it, or, if you are denying, that it cannot be destroyed without it.<sup>33</sup>

This is also a problem for Boethius, whose account begins by addressing both plausible and necessary reasoning but rapidly becomes preoccupied with syllogisms and axioms.<sup>34</sup> While Agricola defines an argument as a

<sup>31</sup> H.A.G. Braakhuis, 'Agricola's View on Universals', in F. Akkerman and A. J. Vanderjagt eds., *Rodolphus Agricola Phrisius (1444-1485)* (Leiden, 1988), pp. 239-247.

<sup>32</sup> See chapter 3 above.

<sup>33</sup> *DID*, p. 7: 'Ergo ut ad alterius confirmationem aliquid possit adhiberi, coniunctum quadam ratione, et velut cognatum esse oportet illi cui probando adhibetur, taleque videri ut non subsistere res sine illo, si affirmes, non subverti, si neges, possit.'

<sup>34</sup> I am thinking of the movement from saying that an argument is something better known, to asserting that an argument always involves a medium term, and that the topics

relation between two terms and while he adverts to the usefulness of non-necessary arguments, the syllogism tends to become his model for argumentative discourse and even for the informative use of language generally. Perhaps no other general account of argument was sufficiently established and well known for him to use.

Agricola forcefully rejects Boethius's topical maxims. First, he points out that, whereas in theory the maxims might underlie necessary arguments, in their nature they will not contribute to plausible arguments. Second, he argues that there are many topics for which no satisfactory maxims can be provided. Then he quotes some of Boethius's maxims to show that they often have to be constructed in a very narrow and restricted way and that, as a result, they do not do justice to the argumentative potential of the topic concerned. Finally he suggests that the maxims are superfluous, since anyone who has an exact knowledge of the nature of the topics will automatically realise the inferential possibilities they express (175-176). Agricola's first three criticisms pick out the weaknesses of Boethius's maxims very acutely, but his fourth point is answered by the maxims' continuing popularity. Some of the commentators on Agricola actually add new maxims to each topic in the commentary.<sup>35</sup> The maxims, either present in the syllogism or capable of being incorporated in a chain of syllogisms, give the topics a precise and limited argumentative force. Through the maxims, Boethius is able to isolate and specify the contribution which the topic makes to a particular argument. Agricola considers that such precise formulations artificially restrict the inferential force of the topics and that the wish to provide them confuses the judgemental section of dialectic with the inventive (179).

### *Lists of Topics*

For Cicero and Boethius the topics are the headings. Invention of arguments is largely a matter of running through them. The maxims, which for Boethius guarantee the validity of inferences, are constructed around the headings and their referents. Even within the topics entries, in most of the versions before Agricola, the emphasis is on the heading, not on the complexities of the relationship it invokes. Since the list of headings is so strongly identified with the topics as a whole, it becomes imperative to ask:

---

classify the innumerable axioms (or in Agricola, propositions) of the world, *PL* 64, 1050B-1051A, 1052B-C. I am not suggesting that the positions taken are the same, rather that the ways they are set out involve similar moves.

<sup>35</sup> See chapter 14 below.

why this list of headings? Where does the list come from? Why is it complete?

Cicero treats the list as traditional. Boethius implies that it is the result of intensive scrutiny of the list of rules in Aristotle's *Topica*, but the two lists he presents, Cicero's and Themistius's, do not derive from Aristotle in any obvious way.<sup>36</sup> Neither Boethius nor Cicero gives a convincing explanation of how the list was arrived at or why it is complete.

Cicero's *Topica* gives the following list of topics:

- Definition
- Enumeration of Parts
- Etymology
- Conjugates
- Genus
- Species
- Similitude
- Differentia*
- Contrary
- Adjunct
- Antecedents
- Consequents
- Repugnants
- Efficient cause
- Effects
- Comparison
- Authority

More than the other lists, Cicero's resembles a classification of arguments. Some of its members (enumeration of parts, antecedents, consequents and repugnants) are forms of argumentation. Besides these there are aspects of grammar (etymology, conjugates) which are also used to make arguments within that subject, and figures from rhetoric (similitude and comparison). The topic of authority seems to derive from the discussions of evidence and witnesses in the rhetoric manual. Other elements come from different parts of the Aristotelian system: the predicables (genus, species, *differentia*, and adjunct, if it reflects accident; otherwise adjunct may derive from the category of quality), the postpredicaments (contrary) and the *Physics* (efficient cause and effects). Definition is one of Plato's methods (no doubt it was also used before that) which Aristotle took over.

---

<sup>36</sup> PL 64, 1052B, 1195B-1206B.

The topics in Cicero's list come from very different sources and indicate different types of relationship to the key word. Cicero does not explain why he believes that his list is complete and it is easy to think of possible additions. Why for example does the list not contain all the categories? But its heterogeneity does not necessarily make it a bad list. It manages to classify a large number of arguments, with some overlaps. There are many things which this list prompts which would be very hard to get from the categories.

Boethius's list of topics derived from Themistius:

(Substance)  
Definition  
Description  
Etymology  
Consequents  
Genus/Whole  
Species/Parts  
Efficient cause  
Material cause  
Formal cause  
Final cause  
Effects  
Generations  
Corruptions  
Accidents  
Judgement  
Similars  
Greater  
Lesser  
Proportion  
Opposites  
Transumption  
Cases  
Conjugates  
Division

Boethius's list ultimately derives from a similar source to Cicero's, but it is more systematic. It spells things out more. Description is now a separate topic, instead of being included in definition. Whole has become separated from definition. All four types of cause are now included and the contribution of natural philosophy is increased through the addition of

generations and corruptions. Adjuncts is assimilated to the set of predicables in being replaced by accidents. Substance, which is given as an alternative to definition replaces it, in order to represent the categories. Comparisons are split up into greater, lesser and proportion. The topic of transumption is added, to cover the case in which an argument is transferred from one term to another that is better known. Sometimes Boethius treats this topic as a variant of the topic from comparison.<sup>37</sup> Conjugates is matched with cases, while division, which in Plato is paired with definition, is added to the list. Boethius also introduced a division into internal, external and middle topics, but he did not explain his classification adequately. This, as Green-Pedersen has recorded, led in medieval topics commentaries to a good deal of argument about what he had in mind.<sup>38</sup> In the main Boethius's list is Cicero's (with small excisions and changes of terminology), expanded through the addition of headings which in Aristotle's system belong with those already included.

---

<sup>37</sup> *PL* 64, 1192A, 1195A, 1206B. When Agricola discusses the differences between his list and Boethius's, he treats transumption as a variant of 'name of a thing'. *DID*, p. 172.

<sup>38</sup> Green-Pedersen, *The Tradition of the Topics*, p. 54.

Alardus's adaptation of Phrissemius's diagram of Agricola's topics is as follows:

		Definition
		Genus
	Within the substance of the thing, from which the thing receives what it is	Species
		Property/ Difference
		Whole
		Parts
		Conjugates
Internal		
	Around the substance. Although they inhere to the thing, they bring a certain manner or disposition to it.	Adjacents Actions Subject
Topics		
	Cognates which share their origin	Causes      Efficient Results      Final Effects Necessarily joined
	<i>Applicita</i> which added to the thing from outside provide it with a certain disposition and name	<i>Destinata</i> Place Time <i>Connexa</i>
External		
	Accidents which can exist with or without a thing	Contingents Name of a thing Opinions Comparison s Similars/ Dissimilars
Joined	without necessity Repugnats (the same thing cannot participate in both)	Opposites <i>Distantia</i>

This gives the following table of correspondences between Agricola's version and the others:

Agricola	Cicero	Boethius/Themistius
Definition	Definition	(Substance), Definition, Description
Genus	Genus	Genus/Whole
Species	Species	Species/Parts
Property <sup>39</sup>		
Whole	Definition	Genus/Whole
Parts	Parts (Enumern.)	Species/Parts
Parts		Material cause, Formal cause <sup>40</sup>
Conjugates	Conjugates	Cases, Conjugates
Adjacents	Adjunct	Accidents
Action		
Subject		
Efficient cause	Efficient cause	Efficient cause
Final cause		Final cause
Effects	Effects	Effects
<i>Destinata</i>		
Place	Adjunct	Accidents
Time	Adjunct	Accidents
<i>Connexa</i>	Adjunct	Accidents
Contingents	Adjunct	Accidents
Name of a thing	Etymology	Etymology
Opinions	Authority	Judgement
Comparisons	Comparison	Greater, Lesser, Proportion
Similars	Similitude	Similars
Opposites	Contrary	Opposites
<i>Distantia</i>	<i>Differentia</i>	
No parallel	Antecedents	Consequents, Generation,
	Consequents	Corruption, Division
	Repugnants	

Agricola retains the main elements of the two lists he inherits, but he attempts to make the list more orderly, and he tries to explain how the

<sup>39</sup> Property forms part of Quintilian's topic of definition. *Institutio oratoria*, 5.10.58-59.

<sup>40</sup> The repetition of parts in column 1 is intended. Agricola's discussion of parts subsumes the matter/form distinction. Material cause and formal cause should be on the line above but there is no space for them.

various groups of headings are related to the key word. His excisions and inclusions make the list a bit more systematic but the real improvements are in the attempt to explain how the list fits together and in the way he takes the emphasis off the heading word by discussion of the different relationships involved in each topic.

Agricola excludes antecedents and consequents on the grounds that they are forms of argumentation (170). Substance and description are absorbed back into definition, because definition defines substance, while description is a less formal but sometimes parallel alternative. Aspects of substance and description also reappear under subject and adjacents (and their related topics, of which more later). Generation and corruption are presumably regarded as included in causes, while division is a method (but it is also discussed under parts) (171).

The topics from the predicables are put together with definition, which they help construct, and with whole and parts, and conjugates, as topics 'within the substance of a thing'. They seem to be treated as aspects of what gives a thing its essential character. This seems orderly, though perhaps conjugates would be better placed beside etymology, among the external topics.

Agricola calls the next group 'topics around the substance'. They are still internal topics, by which he means that they are still essential to the thing, but they reflect its manner or disposition. These three topics are new to the list. The topic of adjacents is concerned with the whole range of qualities accessible to the senses and to the intellect. Actions covers what the thing usually does, while subjects invokes things to which the thing given (the key word) stands as adjacent or action. This threefold division (and, as we shall see, the terms in which it is discussed) seems to reflect Lorenzo Valla's distribution of everything into substance, quality and action.<sup>41</sup>

Two groups of topics are outside the thing but necessarily joined to it. The first group contains the cognates, linked to the key word through the process of becoming: efficient and final causes, effects and *destinata*. *Destinata* are the effects of final causes, so shoe is the *destinatum* of protecting your feet, while it is an effect of a cobbler. The second group are applicita. They do not cause the thing but the thing must have them and they give it some of its character. These are time, place and *connexa*. *Connexa* includes such aspects as wealth, domination and friendship.

---

<sup>41</sup> See chapter 3 above and chapter 12 below.

Two groups of external topics are more loosely connected with the thing: accidents, which can exist with or without the thing, and repugnants which cannot be applied at the same time to the same subject as the key word. The arrangement of these last two groupings is more difficult, since the topics seem to involve different kinds of remoteness. Contingents are less closely joined versions of *connexa* and *adjacents*, so they fit the general plan quite well. Name of a thing (etymology) is not part of the essence of a thing, and it counts as a weaker argument than most of the internal topics (and the implication of Agricola's grouping seems to be that the more external topics generally have a weaker force of implication), but it is not wholly accidental to the thing. It cannot easily be transferred to another word, for example. Opinions, comparisons, and similars are external to the thing in the sense that they are applied to it by some outside intelligence, but they may still go to the very heart of the thing and provide very strong arguments. Opposites and *distantia* (things opposing, but at different levels of the genus/species structure to the exact opposite) are in the class of repugnants. Although in one way the repugnant is as remote as possible from the key word, it is a very specific relationship and can be the source of very strong arguments.

On first impression Agricola's reordering of the existing list of topics seems to be an improvement: it groups like with like and it introduces some justification for the distinction between internal and external topics. Furthermore, the gradation of the topics into six sub-groups, each connected more loosely to the starting point, seems to offer a useful rough and ready indication of the likely strength of the inference in each relationship. Further reflection leads to some qualification of this positive impression. Even without consequents and antecedents the topics remain extremely heterogeneous and, indeed, some of the topics which Agricola adds are hostile to each other: three of Aristotle's categories and three topics representing Valla's alternative classification of reality, which arises out of criticism of Aristotle.

These elements of competition bring out one of the paradoxes of the topics, at least in Agricola's conception of them. In one way the topics aim to be a reasonably consistent and complete classification of the kinds of argument available. In Agricola's strongest statement this classification corresponds to an analysis of the kinds of relationship exhibited in language and in the universe.<sup>42</sup> In another sense they are a checklist of memory keys

---

<sup>42</sup> See note 30 above.

which aim to trigger thoughts about different kinds of argument possible in any given situation. Since the object of memory keys is to call to mind effective and appropriate arguments, elements of duplication or competition, far from being a logical liability may, like redundancy in speech, actually help the system function more effectively. As Agricola says in defending his new topics,

Even if the nature of things does not require it, it is still useful for there to be several topics, that is, approaches and routes, for finding one thing; so that if one of them is less successful in leading us to what we seek, nonetheless by trying a second or a third, we may succeed in some measure.<sup>43</sup>

Agricola's reorganisation of the list of topics is original and substantial. It opens up the questions of how the topics list is constituted and to what extent it is complete. It adds a degree of order to the system. In spite of this a great deal of diversity remains a feature of the topics. The topics do not possess the characteristics of a closed system, and in the end Agricola concedes this.

### *Discussions of Particular Topics*

In his handling of the individual topics entries Agricola breaks even more significantly with the tradition. Most versions of the topics define the heading and give an example of an argument drawn from it. Boethius adds the maxim underpinning the argument in each example. Agricola is much more concerned to explain the nature of each topic, and its different aspects. His examples show the variety and force of the topic. In his version the headings are not seen as fixed elements producing similar responses from the key words. Rather the structure and contents of the topic entry vary with the topic being discussed. For this reason one can only get an idea of his topics by looking at a number of examples. In this section I shall consider Agricola's accounts of definition, causes and effects, etymology, similars and comparisons, and the new topics he provides in the area of adjuncts. Where appropriate I shall make comparisons with earlier versions. These samples are no substitute for reading the text, but they should give some idea of its richness.

### *Definition*

---

<sup>43</sup> *DID*, pp. 110-111: 'Nec est inutile, etiam si id natura rei non cogeret, plures tamen esse locos, hoc est aditus et vias unius inveniendae rei ut si minus unus perducat nos ad id quod quaerimus, altero tamen tertiove tentantibus aliqua parte procedat.'

Agricola's account of definition begins by defining it and then lists its components.

It is a discourse (*oratio*), which explains what a certain thing is. Everyone agrees that it ought to consist of genus and *differentia*. So, if rational animal is the definition of man, animal is the genus, rational is the *differentia*. Man, that is, the thing being defined, is called the species.<sup>44</sup>

He supports this with definitions of genus, species and *differentia* ('a particular mark of a thing, by which according to the way it itself is, it is distinguished from other things').<sup>45</sup> He explains that there is a severe shortage of *differentiae*. Rational is a suitable *differentia* for man, since man is man because capable of reason. Such other properties as being two-footed and walking upright are not so suitable. In many cases the lack of a suitable *differentia* forces a writer to build up a definition by adding to a genus a number of properties which successively exclude all species except the one being defined. An example of this is the definition of an ass as a solid-footed, long-eared, fertile animal. Asses, horses and mules have solid feet, but horses are not long-eared and mules are not capable of reproduction. Noting that some (he is thinking of Boethius) have called this type of definition a description, he rejects this, on the authority of Cicero and Aristotle.<sup>46</sup> To Agricola description is defined as a verbal expression of the appearance of some thing, as if it were placed before the inspection of the eyes.<sup>47</sup>

It is not at all easy to pass on any instructions for finding a definition. This much is certain, it will be very useful for anyone who wishes to define some given thing to have knowledge of the nature of the thing and to have surveyed it carefully. In this case he should easily find, first, something general in that thing in which it agrees with others of a similar nature. Let us take the example of defining law. We find first that law has in it a certain force of compelling and ordering (*iussum*), from which it seems to have taken its name. So law will be either something we have agreed or a sort of decree. However not every decree will be a law. For we do not call the decrees which masters give slaves, which fathers give children and which philosophers give disciples, laws. So let us think of something by

<sup>44</sup> *DID*, p. 26: 'Ea est oratio, qua quid sit res explicatur. Convenitque inter omnes debere confici eam ex genere et differentia, ut sit definitio hominis, animal rationale; in qua animal est genus; rationale differentia; homo, id scilicet quod definitur, species dicitur.'

<sup>45</sup> *DID*, p. 26: 'Differentia est propria rei nota, qua secundum id ipsum quod talis est, ab aliis distinguitur rebus.'

<sup>46</sup> *DID*, pp. 26-27, *PL* 64, 1187B-D, Aristotle, *Topica*, 132a1, Cicero, *Topica*, 6.29-30.

<sup>47</sup> *DID*, p. 27: 'Descriptio enim, quae poëtis crebro, nonnunquam oratoribus in usu est, ea verbosius rem exprimit, nec in id adhibetur ut quid sit res indicet sed qualis sit, velut inspiciendam ante oculos ponat.'

which we shall exclude these cases. We see that they have some sort of power, but that it is smaller than what laws can make; so let us add 'pleasing to a higher power' that is, of the people or those to whom the people have transferred their power, such as a senate or a prince. Well, then, will whatever a prince orders be a law? Will it be a law when he orders his slaves to spread out a bed or to set a table? I do not think so. But what is ordered by a city, and what belongs to preserving its state will be. But it will not be a law if it either weighs more heavily on some part of the city, or if it harms neighbouring people against the custom of nature or of peoples. Therefore it ought also to be equitable. Let us inspect the matter carefully and see whether anything can be embraced by the definition which does not come under the name of the thing defined. Conversely, as well, is anything included in the thing defined which the definition does not admit? If it does not seem so, let us recapitulate and say: A law is a decree of a higher power, for the sake of preserving the state of the city, formulated in agreement with equity and goodness.<sup>48</sup>

He gives a commented step by step definition of city, as a second example. Then he offers some rules for definitions. The definition must designate the thing defined exactly. Its scope must be neither broader nor narrower. The definition must explain the substance of the thing defined. It must avoid ambiguous, obscure or metaphorical language.

It will be useful for this purpose to analyse the densely packed definitions of other people and to work out the thinking behind the individual words, to make a judgement, and to open up for ourselves the way of dealing with the matter in practice. It will also help to define things which are well known and easy to explain. If this is done carefully and methodically, gradually there will be a chance of dealing with more difficult objects. This method of defining is useful both because of the knowledge of things which are explained by definition - when this is done it is remarkable how they

---

<sup>48</sup> *DID*, pp. 27-28: 'Tradere ulla inveniendas definitionis praecepta haud in promptu est. Illud est certum, quisquis definire quippiam volet, utilissimum esse cognitam sibi naturam eius et diligenter perlustratam habere. Id si fuerit, facile inveniet primum in ipsa re commune quiddam, in quo cum aliis quae simili sunt natura conveniat. Sumamus exemplo nobis Ius definiendum. Invenimus primum ius vim quandam in se habere cogendi et iussum, unde nomen videtur traxisse. Itaque erit Ius nobis vel placitum, vel decretum quoddam. Verum tamen non omne decretum ius erit; nam et domini servis, et patres filiis, et philosophi discipulis decreta aedunt, quae tamen ius non vocamus. Cogitemus igitur aliiquid, quo ista excludamus. Videmus potestatem quandam esse istis, sed minorem, quam ut iura facere possint. Addamus ergo, esse placitum maioris potestatis, hoc est, vel populi, vel in quem populus potestatem suam transtulit, ut senatus, ut princeps. Quid ergo? Quicquid iusserit princeps, si servis ut lectum sternant, ut coenam instruant, ius erit? Non videtur, sed quod civitati iussum est, idque quod ad statum eius tuendum pertinet. Sed neque id quidem ius erit, si vel partem aliquam civitatis gravius premat, vel finitimos contra fas naturae gentiumve laedat. Aequum ergo esse oportebit. Circumferamus diligenter oculos, videamusque ecquid intra complexum definitionis possit venire, quod nomine definiti non contineatur; sed et contra quoque, contineaturne aliiquid definito, quod definitio non admittat. Quae si non videbuntur, colligamus iam a capite omnia, dicamusque: Ius est decretum maioris potestatis, ad tuendum civitatis statum, ex aequo et bono institutum.'

propose to the mind some sure sign of the resolution of thoughts - and because it confers authority on the person speaking, for no one seems to know something better than the person who can explain briefly and suitably what it is.<sup>49</sup>

This topic entry includes a number of elements. It begins with a definition, and an explanation of the definition. Then the parts are named and defined. Then a problem (the shortage of *differentiae*) is discussed, and a second method of defining is explained. An objection is answered. Then Agricola goes through the process of defining two words, to show how it is done and to set out the kinds of thing one needs to have in mind. Then he offers some rules for definition, some suggestions about how to practice defining, and some remarks on the use of definitions.

The emphasis throughout is on the definition as a form of expression (even as a form of mental exploration), on the practice of defining and on the uses of the process. There are no forms of inference or rules for arguing. The implication (which is later set out as a general principle) is that once someone understands how definitions work, he or she will also be able to work out how to argue from them. The aim of the topic entry is to give an understanding of how definition can be practised in different circumstances, how one should set about it, and what one should aim for.

Definition is also an important topic for Cicero, Quintilian and Boethius. In the second part of his *Topica*, Cicero first gives the definition which Agricola uses and then divides things defined into those which have a real existence, and those whose existence is purely mental. He prefers two kinds of definition, by enumeration of parts and by division, in which all the species of the thing being defined are set out. The traditional authorities describe the method of definition as follows. Beginning from the qualities which the thing to be defined shares with other things, one should go on to isolate its distinctive property. Cicero shows how inheritance and *gentiles* (those who belong to one of the old families) can be defined in this way. Then he supports his account of definition by division with further discussion of genus and species. Finally he rejects more casual kinds of

---

<sup>49</sup> *DID*, pp. 28-29: 'Profuerit ad hanc rem crebras aliorum definitiones solvere, et rationem singulorum verborum exigere iudiciumque parare, et usu tractandae rei viam nobis patefacere. Iuvabit etiam notas res atque explicatiu faciles definire, quod si diligenter et cum ratione fiat, paulatim et difficiliorum spes erit. Utilis est haec definiendi ratio, cum propter rerum cognitionem, quae definitione explicatae, mirum est quo pacto velut certum quoddam signum destinandarum cogitationum proponant animo, tum quod parat autoritatem disserenti. Neque enim melius rem noscere videtur, quam qui quid ea sit, breviter et apte possit explicare.'

definition such as those which use words metaphorically.<sup>50</sup>

In the first part of *Topica*, he had spoken of definition as opening up what is involved in a thing and had provided an example of an argument drawn from the topic.

The civil law is an equity established by people of the same city in order to secure their own property.

Knowledge of this equity is useful.

Therefore the discipline of civil law is useful.<sup>51</sup>

Although Cicero's view of definition understandably does not fall into the Aristotelian mould of genus and *differentia*, it is quite clear that his account suggests many of the elements of Agricola's: the basic definition, the discussion of genus and species, the objection to metaphorical language, and, most importantly, the demonstration of a definition in progress.

Quintilian distinguishes between definitions in general terms ('Rhetoric is the science of speaking well') and definitions in detail ('Rhetoric is the science of correct invention, disposition and style, with a dependable memory and dignity of delivery'). He explains that etymology may be included. He defines and describes arguments from genus, *differentia* and property. He cites Cicero on genus and species and on the way division helps definition. At each stage he provides examples, as Agricola does.<sup>52</sup>

The usual pattern of Boethius's versions is that a definition of the topic, which sometimes includes division or a distinction from another topic, is followed by an example in the form of a syllogism drawn from the topic of an argument. The topical maxim involved is stated, followed by the topical difference.

'A definition shows the substance, and definition is a complete demonstration of substance'. If it is asked whether trees are animals, a syllogism like this could be made.

An animal is an animate sensitive substance.

A tree is not an animate sensitive substance.

Therefore a tree is not an animal.

The maxim is 'that thing to which the definition of the genus does not belong, is not a species of the thing defined'.<sup>53</sup> Beside definition, Boethius

<sup>50</sup> *Topica*, 5.26-7.32.

<sup>51</sup> *Topica*, 2.9.

<sup>52</sup> *Institutio oratoria*, 5.10.54-64.

<sup>53</sup> *PL* 64, 1187A: 'Diffinitio enim substantiam monstrat, et substantiae integra demonstratio diffinitio est...cui generis diffinitio non convenit; id eius cuius ea diffinitio est, species non est.'

places the topic of description, his name for a definition involving accidents, which the other writers regard as a second kind of definition. Peter of Spain's version is elaborated from Boethius's.

Definition is a discourse signifying what a being is. The topic from definition is the connection between definition and the thing defined. It contains four arguments and four maxims.

1. With the definition as subject affirmatively.

A rational mortal animal runs; therefore a man runs.

Whatever is predicated of the definition, is also predicated of the thing defined.

2. With the definition as predicate affirmatively.

Socrates is a rational animal and mortal; therefore Socrates is man.

The thing defined is predicated of whatever the definition is predicated of.

3. With the definition as subject negatively.

A mortal rational animal is not running; therefore a man is not running.

Whatever is removed from the definition, is also removed from the thing defined.

4. With the definition as predicate negatively.

A stone is not a mortal rational animal; therefore a stone is not a man.

The thing defined is removed from whatever the definition is removed from.<sup>54</sup>

The comparison with these later versions underlines the extent to which Agricola is closest to the account in the second part of Cicero's *Topica*, not only in details but also in approach. All the same Agricola adds a great deal to Cicero's version, producing an entry which is logically more thorough as well as better oriented to linguistic practice.

Both Cicero and Agricola were concerned to explain what definitions are and to show how they are constructed. Agricola is even more careful to explain himself in practical terms. Unlike Cicero, and like later writers, Agricola gives primacy to the definition which consists of genus and *differentia*, but he immediately and very practically sets out the problem of

<sup>54</sup> *Tractatus*, p. 60: 'Diffinitio est oratio quid est esse significans. Locus a diffinitione est habitudo diffinitionis ad diffinitum. Et continet quatuor argumenta et quatuor maximas.

Primo subiiciendo diffinitionem affirmative; secundo predicando eam affirmative; tertio subiiciendo eam negative; quarto predicando eam negative. Exemplum horum omnium sunt haec: 'animal rationale mortale currit; ergo homo currit'...Maxima: quidquid predicatur de definitione et de diffinitio...Secundo sic: 'Sortes est animal rationale et mortale; ergo Sortes est homo'...Maxima: de quocunque predicatur diffinitio, et diffinitum. Tertio sic: 'animal rationale et mortale non currit: ergo homo non currit.'...Maxima: quidquid removetur a diffinitione et a diffinito. Quarto sic: 'lapis non est animal rationale et mortale, ergo lapis non est homo'...Maxima: a quocunque removetur diffinitio, et diffinitum.'

finding suitable *differentiae*. This is a serious drawback of a well established doctrine which nobody else alludes to. Agricola points out that the only *differentia* that virtually everyone agrees on is 'rational' in 'rational animal'. He also makes the point that even that example is disputed by some people (presumably those like Quintilian and Valla who hold that some animals have reasoning processes).<sup>55</sup> He further adds rules for checking definitions (perhaps based on Victorinus's *De definitione*),<sup>56</sup> advice on practising definition making, and some remarks on the usefulness of definition. It is very striking that its usefulness is expressed in terms of knowledge of things in the world, and giving the impression of authority (in a rhetorical way), rather than through examples of inference. The contrast with Peter of Spain could hardly be stronger. The comparison between the richness of the sense of linguistic and mental practice in Agricola, and the overcertain formality of the maxims explains why Agricola rejects them so strongly.

### *Causes and Effects*

In the topics involving causes and effects, Agricola develops the treatment of his predecessors in a different direction. At *Topica* 22, Cicero gives two legal examples in which a comparison of causes, and the effect of marriage, determine the cases. At *Topica* 58, cause is divided into sufficient and assisting, with and without desire or mental agitation, uniform and varied. Examples are provided which illustrate each type. Then Cicero stresses the importance of causes and suggests that effects are divided in the same way. Quintilian divides arguments from cause into those necessarily and those generally true; he cites examples of each (including two from poetry, which Cicero had used) and examples from speeches. Finally he points out that causes can be traced back anywhere.<sup>57</sup> Boethius provides four topics to correspond to Aristotle's four types of cause and additional topics from effects, corruptions and generations.<sup>58</sup> In each case he gives an argument and a maxim, for instance

If someone argues that the Moors do not bear arms, he will say that they do not use arms at all, because they lack iron. The maxim is: where the

<sup>55</sup> Valla, *Repastinatio*, pp. 69-70. *Institutio oratoria*, 2.16.15-16, Cicero, *De natura deorum*, 3.9.11.

<sup>56</sup> PL 64, 891B-910B. The rules could also come from remarks in Aristotle, *Topica*, 140a24f, 140b16f, 141a24f, 139b19-140a5.

<sup>57</sup> *Institutio oratoria*, 5.10.80-84.

<sup>58</sup> PL 64, 1189C-1190B.

material is lacking, what is made out of the material is lacking. The topic is from material.<sup>59</sup>

Agricola defines a cause as a thing by the force of which something happens. In order for something to happen a thing which has the power of doing is required, by the agency of which a thing can become or be formed. Since nothing is done without a stimulus, everything has an intention or aim, on account of which it is done. An efficient cause supplies the work of doing a thing. A final cause is that for the sake of which it is done. Some efficient causes follow necessity, others choice. Necessity applies particularly in the physical world, and, on some accounts, to animals. It is further divided into natural inclination (as a fire burns - though here it is close to action) and external force, which is weaker and less enduring, as when a stone is thrown. Choice is involved in human affairs and in all consultations and deliberations. Where necessity rules it is enough to show that something could have happened, but where choice is involved reference must be made to motive and intention. Within efficient causes, governing causes are to be distinguished from serving causes and instruments. Thus, in waging war the prince rules, the soldier serves and the horses and arms are instruments (78-81).

The final cause is the most important cause. All things are done for the sake of some good, whether it be a good in the thing itself, or to be derived from it. Different kinds of 'good' (of fire, of trees, of man) are considered. Final ends subsume intermediate ends. The wall is a kind of end for the man piling stones, but the final end is the house. One thing, a horse for example, may have opposed purposes, from its nature, and from the good we can make of it. In the same operation there may be a number of ends corresponding to the work, the worker and the builder. The aim of the work is the house, of the worker his wage, of the builder to live in it or to sell it.

The most important things are the first to be undertaken, the last to be completed, for other things are done for their sake. Thus in building a ship, the leading part belongs to the man who provides the payment, whose aim is the riches which are made out of transporting goods. The sailor follows him, for this man does not go to those lengths, but looks for gain from the wages of sailing. The man who makes the ship, does not ask whether anyone will sail in it, he only constructs the ship. In the same way those who cut down timber, who make anchors and ropes are only interested in

---

<sup>59</sup> *PL* 64, 1189C-D: 'Rursus si quis Mauros arma non habere contendat, dicet idcirco eos armis minime uti, quod his ferrum desit. Maxima propositio, ubi materia deest, et quod ex materia efficitur, desit. Locus a materia.'

the ship in so far as they provide material or produce nautical equipment.<sup>60</sup>

Agricola divides *eventa* into effects which correspond to efficient causes, and *destinata* which correspond to final causes.<sup>61</sup> The same thing, viewed from different positions, can be found by different topics. Thus the architect and labourers are efficient causes of the house as effect, and effects of the builder. If the house is the final cause they are *destinata*, while in relation to the builder, since he has to get hold of them, they are intermediate ends. The *destinatum* and the final cause are harder to differentiate than efficient cause and effect. The topics of causes and effects are very fruitful and of great use, especially in deliberations which often consider aims and means of achieving things. In praise and blame final causes and effects are very important. The final cause is particularly connected with virtue and moral judgement (87-89).

In these chapters the emphasis is on exploring the kinds of causes and effects and their interrelations. The analysis of examples is original and fruitful for ways of thinking about collaboration and responsibility, as Michael Baxandall has suggested.<sup>62</sup> Above all Agricola is trying to draw out the variety of relationships possible both between separate causes, and linking causes with results. His examples show how the way a given configuration of causes is perceived alters with a change in the point of perception. His remarks on the contribution of different kinds of cause have implications for the way causes are used in argument, but once again he offers not examples of inferences from either topic, but suggestions about when such arguments might be used.

Agricola owes more to Cicero than to any of the other versions in

<sup>60</sup> *DID*, pp. 84-85: 'Prima enim ad agendum potissima sunt postrema ad expetendum, illorum enim gratia alia expetuntur. Sic in facienda nave, primae sunt partes eius qui impensas praebet, cuius finis sunt opes quae ex subvectis parantur mercibus. Illum nauta sequitur. Is namque non eosque se porrigit, verum lucrum ex navigandi mercede spectat. Iam qui navem fabricatur, non id quaerit, ecquis ipsa sit navigaturus, modo extruat navem. Sic qui ligna caedunt, qui ancoras funesque parant, non illi navem spectant sed, ut materiam solam praebant, instrumentum nauticum parent.'

<sup>61</sup> The meaning of *destinatum* is difficult to determine. When defining it Agricola says only that it corresponds to the final cause (*DID*, p. 88). In the examples which he gives, however, *destinata* seem to be persons or things which have to be obtained on the way to achieving the overall goal (*DID*, pp. 88, 368, 369, on which see the textual correction at chapter 13, n. 21 below). This corresponds roughly to the glosses which Alardus and Phrissemius give in their commentaries. This looks like a modification of Agricola's original position. In practice, as his examples show, effect and final cause frequently overlap, thus leaving little room for 'final effect'. Intermediate effects, on the other hand, seem to lack a well established name, thus leaving a role for the term *destinatum* to play.

<sup>62</sup> M. Baxandall, 'Rudolph Agricola on patrons efficient and patrons final: a Renaissance discrimination', *Burlington Magazine*, 124 (1982), pp. 424-425.

causes and effects (as in most other topics) but on this occasion he has added several further distinctions and many new examples to broaden the reader's way of considering relationships of cause and effect.<sup>63</sup>

*Etymology/Name of a thing*

The name of a thing is usually treated as one of the less important topics, though arguments from etymology are by no means rare. Quintilian mentions etymology very briefly under definition, later commenting that it does not help definitions much. Cicero explains the meaning of etymology and states that arguments from this topic are common in debate. He concludes with a detailed discussion of the meaning of *postliminium*, as an example. Boethius treats etymology as a variation on definition. He provides an example (since no one doubts that the love of wisdom should be studied, philosophy should be studied) but no maxim. Peter of Spain provides four maxims (whatever is predicated of the etymology is also predicated of the word interpreted; the word interpreted is predicated of whatever the etymology is predicated of; and their negations) and a whimsical example (a lover of wisdom runs, therefore a philosopher runs).<sup>64</sup>

Agricola first explains that the topic of name of a thing belongs not among those closely associated with the substance, but among accidents. He shows with examples that the names for something can change over time. Many arguments are derived from names. He instances Cicero's jokes about Verres's name and a word-play of Augustus's. He backs up his argument that words are more subject to change than the things they designate with some examples of words that have changed their meaning (*latro*, *hostis*, *parricida*) including some in which the etymological meaning is entirely different from the current meaning (*praetorium*, *codex*, *liber*). This leads him to conclude that the name must be regarded as separate from the substance (117-118).

The use of it is not simple. For sometimes it proceeds from the meaning itself or the interpretation of the name. As when someone says the soul consists of air which we draw in by breathing because it is called soul (*anima*) which means wind. In the same way we say that money is in domestic use (*instrumentum*) because it is used to furnish (*instruatur*) a

---

<sup>63</sup> It is possible that Agricola's discussion of voluntary and involuntary causes is influenced by Aristotle's discussion of the virtues in *Rhetoric*, I, 10-13, but there is no exact parallel.

<sup>64</sup> *Institutio oratoria*, 5.10.55, *Topica*, 2.10, 8.35-37, *PL* 64, 1187D-1188A, *Tractatus*, p. 62.

house (*domus*). There is another sort of use when we take the argument from homonymy, that is paronomasia, or, to speak more colloquially, equivocation. As when we say that the arts of humanity should be desired because nothing is so suited to a man as humanity itself. And those who incite the people against the senators (*patres*) behave very badly, because no name on earth should be more venerated than that of the fathers. And Isocrates in *The Praise of Helen* says that beauty should be admired and praised most of all; and he makes this one indication among others that we approve virtue most of all, because it is the most beautiful of all things. It is easy to see how the names of humanity, fathers and beauty are used with different meanings in these examples.

If this is done in a hidden way or among other arguments tending to the same end, it will result in a deceptive argument. But if it is done more openly it will usually end up as a joke. As in 'Nero is certainly a descendant of Aeneas because while Aeneas carried the weight of his father, Nero carried that of his mother'.

(Then he refers to two examples he had used earlier).

There is a further use of this topic, when a word has been used in a transferred sense, and we draw an argument from the thing which it means, not in this context but in its usual meaning, as in this example from Ovid:

Whoever will have hidden the fire,

Is himself always betrayed by its light.

He has put fire in place of love; then the argument proceeds from light, as if he had spoken of a real fire. Similarly, Phormio in Terence says:

I will tell you something which will so inflame you with anger that

you will never put it out not even if you dissolve in tears.

He said inflamed instead of angry, then he took the rest as though he thought he was really burning.<sup>65</sup>

---

<sup>65</sup> DID, pp. 118-119: 'Usus eius non simplex est. Quandoque enim ex ipsa vi aut interpretatione nominis. Ut qui dicat, animam constare ex aëre, quem inspirando haurimus, quoniam anima, quod ventum significat, sit vocata. Sic pecuniam in instrumento domestico esse, quia ipsa instruatur domus. Alius est usus cum ducimus ex ὀμονήσιο, id est, agnominatio, vel (ut vulgo loquimur) ex aequivocatione argumentum. Ut expetendas esse humanitatis artes, quia nihil tam proprium sit hominis, quam ipsa humanitas. Et pessime facere qui plebem contra patres concident, quoniam nullum in terris nomen venerandum magis sit quam patrum. Et Isocrates in *Helenes laude*, pulchritudinem inquit admirandum maxime laudandumque esse, eiusque inter reliqua signum facit quod virtutem maxime probamus, quoniam pulcherrima rerum sit omnium. Facile est perspectu quomodo humanitatis, et patrum, et pulchritudinis nomen in diversas flectatur significaciones.'

Quod si occultius fiat, aut rebus in idem tendentibus, captiosa fit argumentatio. Sin apertius, in ridiculum persaepe evadit. Ut certam esse progeniem Aeneae Neronem, quoniam patrem Aeneas sustulerit, Nero matrem ...

Alius praeterea est huius loci usus, cum translato nomine, deinde ducimus ex re, non quam hoc in loco, sed quam proprie significat, argumentum. Quale est apud Ovidium:

Quis enim celaverit ignem,

Lumine qui semper proditur ipse suo?

Ignem pro amore posuit; deinde ex lumine argumentatur tanquam de vero igno loqueretur.

Sic apud Terentium Phormio:

Hisce ego dictis illam tibi tam incensam dabo,

ut ne extinguis lachrymis, si totus extillaveris.

Agricola takes this topic in a broad way, as covering all the ways the meaning of a word can be set against what it refers to, not merely those ways that are connected with etymology. He removes it from its privileged position as part of substance, thus in effect rejecting the kinds of inference Peter of Spain suggests. Instead he sees it as a way of making rather oblique arguments about something, as a way of making a point under the cover of a joke, or as a way of extending a metaphor. As a whole he puts his emphasis on the gap between the meaning of the name and the thing or concept it is used to refer to. This leads him to emphasize it as a source more of implications and transitions than of direct arguments. He also points to its associations with equivocation and deceptive arguing.

### *Similars and Comparisons*

Similars and comparisons occur in Agricola's three main sources: Cicero, Quintilian and Boethius.<sup>66</sup> In Cicero and Quintilian they are discussed several paragraphs apart, but, in both cases, shared examples show a connection between the two topics which neither author adverts to. Boethius treats them successively, regarding comparison as three topics: from the greater, from the lesser, from proportion. He treats from equals as contained within similars. As usual his topic descriptions consist mainly of an example of an argument, and a maxim which supports it. In these cases the maxims appear to be rather problematic, for example:

If what inheres in a similar way is not a property, nor is the thing in question a property.

If what seems the more to inhere does not inhere, nor will what seems the less to inhere, do so.<sup>67</sup>

The difficulties posed by 'inheres in a similar way' and 'seems the more to inhere' overshadow any gain in understanding which the form of the axiom might appear to give.

Cicero explains that the topic of similars takes different forms: the adducing of several comparisons in induction, the comparison of equals,

---

Incensam pro irata dixit, deinde reliqua subiecit, velut vere ardenter crederet.' Ovid, *Heroides*, XVI, 7-8, Terence, *Phormio*, 974-975. Modern editions of Terence give a somewhat different text:

Hisce ego illam dictis ita tibi incensam dabo  
ut ne restinguas, lacrumis si extillaveris.

<sup>66</sup> *Topica*, 3.15; 4.23; 10.41-45; 18.68-71, *Institutio oratoria*, 5.10.73, 86-93, *PL* 64, 1190C-1191A.

<sup>67</sup> *PL* 64, 1190D-1191A: 'si quod similiter inest, non est proprium, nec id de quo quaeritur esse proprium potest....si id quod magis videtur inesse non inest, nec id quod minus videbitur inesse inerit.' Compare note 15 above.

and the citing of parallel cases or examples. Both Cicero and Quintilian have more to say about comparisons, dividing them into comparisons from the greater, the lesser and the equal, and into those which deal with quality, quantity, value or relation. Cicero discusses what greater and lesser might be, in relation to these four classes. Some of his remarks here recall Aristotle on persuasive arguments. For example:

In respect to quantity, more goods are preferred to fewer, fewer evils to more, good things which last for a longer time to those of shorter duration.<sup>68</sup>

Quintilian treats comparison as a source of syllogisms and as a form of argument in its own right, showing how it can be used in conjunction with other topics like definition, quality, genus, whole and part.

In spite of attempts by Cicero and Quintilian to provide clarification, the topics of similars and comparisons had not been defined clearly or distinguished from each other; the nature of the arguments they produce had not been discussed and their relationship with the forms of argument and with other topics needed elaboration.

Agricola treats the two topics as a pair, and uniquely he places comparison before similars.

Comparison is a crowded topic and one of great use to orators. It is usually ready and to hand. And because it is drawn from things which do not have to be pulled up from the depths, but which are usually known and conspicuous, it also consequently possesses a ready strength for convincing the minds of ordinary people.<sup>69</sup>

He defines comparison carefully, distinguishing the sense in which he uses the word, and showing with literary examples and commentary how it includes but exceeds *exemplum*. Again using examples, he distinguishes between comparison, in which two things are compared in respect of one aspect or quality which they have in common ('a is longer than b'), and similar, in which two things are compared in respect of the relationship which holds between each of them and two separate others ('a is to c, as b is to d'). He then gives examples of positive and negative inferences from greater to lesser and from lesser to greater, thus disproving Peter of Spain's position that greater to lesser works only negatively, lesser to greater only

---

<sup>68</sup> *Topica*, 18.69, Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1363b18, 1364b31, *Topica*, 116a13, 117a16.

<sup>69</sup> *DID*, p. 132: 'Comparatio frequens est et magno usui rhetoribus locus. Paratus enim fere et ad manum est. Et quoniam ex iis sumitur, quae non alte sunt eruenda, sed propemodum nota sunt atque conspicua, etiam expeditam proinde vim habet ad ruidiores animos permovendos.'

positively.<sup>70</sup> He stresses the importance of ensuring that the things compared are similar in kind, since something is only greater than something else in certain respects. He analyses a section from the *Aeneid* to show the working of a comparison in which the third term alters but is strictly parallel. He continues the analysis of parallel passages to show how in some arguments, strict equality is stronger, while in others further persuasiveness is obtained by moving from an apparent argument from equals to one which combines from greater to lesser with from lesser to greater (132-135).

Of all the topics from which arguments are drawn almost none has less strength against a resistant hearer than similitude, on the other hand there is none more suitable for the hearer who follows willingly and shows himself apt to be taught. For if it is correctly applied, it opens up a thing and places a sort of picture of it before the mind so that although it does not bring with it the necessity of agreeing, it does cause an implicit reluctance to disagree. Therefore it is not so frequently used for proving things, but it is often used by orators for exploring and illuminating things, and is even more often used by poets. In spite of this, similitude very often has an appearance of proving by the very fact that it shows how something is. Thus when you read that similitude of Quintilian: 'just as a vase with a narrow mouth rejects an excess of liquid but is filled by flowing or pouring gradually', it does not therefore follow that, on account of this, the delicate wits of boys must be taught according to their own strengths, but nonetheless, once someone has conceived the matter in his mind according to this image, he persuades himself that it cannot be otherwise.<sup>71</sup>

Agricola's comment here is extremely subtle and perceptive, registering the power of arguments from similitude as well as their limitations. However helpful similitude is in explanation, it can easily be rejected; it is not a proof, but it can act like a proof in accustoming someone to think about a

<sup>70</sup> *Tractatus*, p. 73, *DID*, pp. 133-134.

<sup>71</sup> *DID*, p. 142: 'Omnium locorum e quibus ducuntur argumenta, nulli fere minus est virium contra renitentem auditorem, quam similitudini. Ad eum vero qui sponte sequitur, docendumque se praebet, accommodatior nullus est. Aperit enim rem (si recte adhibeat) et quandam eius imaginem subiicit animo, ut cum assentiendi necessitatem non afferat, afferat tacitum dissentienti pudorem. Quapropter ad probandum non ita crebro, ad explanandum illustrandumque saepe ab oratoribus, a poetis saepius adhibetur. Habet tamen persaepe probantis speciem similitudo, eo ipso, quod rem qualis sit indicat. Itaque cum legis Quintiliani illud: Vascula oris angusti superfusam humoris copiam respuant, sensim autem influentibus vel instillantibus etiam replentur, non conficitur utique, debere propter hoc teneri puerorum ingenia pro modo virium suarum doceri. Sed tamen concipiendo quisque rem apud animum suum sub hac imagine, persuadet sibi, aliter fieri non posse.' *Institutio oratoria*, 1.2.28. Sir Philip Sidney may be alluding to this passage when he says 'for the force of a similitude not being to prove anything to a contrary disputer, but only to explain to a willing hearer', *Apology for Poetry*, ed. G. Shepherd (Manchester, 1973), p. 139. I am grateful to Brian Vickers for suggesting this parallel.

problem in a certain way. The point is developed by an equally illuminating discussion of the way in which a simile from Lucan affects the imagined audience of Caesar's speech.

A famous similitude in Lucan appears to have been put in the form of an argument:

Do you think that Caesar's career can feel any loss if you leave him,  
as if all the rivers should threaten to withhold the waters  
which they pour into the sea? The ocean would no more fall  
when these waters had been taken away than now it rises.

Clearly, it would be lame and distinctly weak reasoning if someone argued in this way: Rivers withdrawn from the sea do not diminish it, so nor will you by deserting Caesar hold back the course of his affairs. When however the similitude is employed not for proving a point but for teaching, and sweeps minds along towards itself, then whoever hears it does not think about Caesar or the soldiers as they really are, but thinks of Caesar as a kind of ocean, the soldiers as rivers, and, what would have been unbelievable in relation to the real persons of Caesar and the soldiers, with his mind now carried away and transformed into a different vision, he accepts just as it was perceived in the similitude and entirely persuades himself that it is really like that.<sup>72</sup>

Agricola's comment describes the effect of the metaphor and investigates the relation between the logical structure of the passage and its effect.

He comments that since similitudes are entirely outside the thing proposed, they seem to be more difficult to find than arguments generated by the other topics. What one is seeking is not a similarity of objects but a similarity between processes or relations associated with two different objects. He returns to his example from Lucan and explores the difficulties involved in finding appropriate similitudes by considering the advantages and disadvantages of other comparisons (the sun, the rocks, the earth) which might have been employed in that situation (143-145).

Agricola's version makes its initial definitions and distinctions more clearly than his sources. He provides a careful and subtle analysis of how

---

<sup>72</sup> *DID*, pp. 142-143: 'Apud Lucanum egregia videtur similitudo pro arguento posita: Caesaris an cursus vestrae sentire putatis/ Damnum posse fugae? veluti si cuncta minentur/ Flumina (quos miscent) pelago subducere fontes/ Non magis ablatis unquam decreverit [Modern editors read *descenderit*] aequor/ Quam nunc crescit aquis. Planum est videre, si quis sic argumentetur: flumina subducta mari non minuunt ipsum, ergo nec vos deserentes Caesarem retinebitis cursum rerum suarum, frigidum esse et plane enerve argumentum. Quando vero sumitur non ad pervincendam rem sed docendam, rapitque mentes ad se similitudo. Non iam quisquis haec audit, cogitat de Caesare vel militibus id quod sunt, sed in specie maris Caesarem, in fluminum milites capit; quodque in propriis Caesaris militumque personis incredibile fuisse, abrepto iam transformatoque in alienam imaginem animo, velut perspectum in similitudine accipit, prorsusque sic esse sibi ipsi persuadet.' Lucan, *De bello civili*, V, 335-39.

arguments from the topics work and practical advice on how to use the topics to find arguments. The outstanding feature, however, is the way in which Agricola makes his points about similitude by close examination of his examples. He is not simply pointing to an argument which may be useful, he is saying something more general about how language works.

### *Adjuncts and associated topics*

The seven topics which Agricola distinguishes in the area occupied in Cicero's version by the topic of adjuncts are divided into three groups. The first three (adjacents, action, subject) are regarded as within the thing itself but not part of the substance. They add a certain manner or disposition. The second group (time, place, *connexa*) are called things attached (*applicata*). They are added to the thing from outside, but they bring it a certain name and a certain quality. Contingents, the seventh, is part of the group of accidents, which means that contingents and the thing to which they are applied can exist independently (23-25). The groups are organised in order of increasing distance from the object in question. Ideas or things contained within the earlier topics are supposed to be closer to, and therefore to give a more reliable indication about, the thing in question than those farther away. While considering the individual topics Agricola is particularly concerned to clarify the differences among adjacents, *connexa* and contingents which contain similar sorts of thing. *Connexa* can be divided from something and can exist separately, where adjacents cannot (102). For example, power, citizenship, the status of a foreigner and riches are *connexa*, where skin-colour, smell, and the individual person's knowledge of grammar are adjacents (62-65, 103). Contingents are connected still more loosely. So while riches exist separately from a rich man, a man cannot be called rich without riches. A man may on the other hand be pale without being sick. Paleness would be a contingent of the sick man, whereas riches would be *connexa* of the rich man. While servants may often be crafty they are not always so, so their craftiness is contingent, whereas capacity for skill is an adjacent of man, but particular skills are *connexa* of particular craftsmen (102, 111). These examples indicate that the distinctions between adjacents, *connexa*, and contingents can sometimes be too narrow to insist on. The subdivisions and examples they include may nevertheless assist in invention.

Thus adjacents are divided into those which are apprehended by each of the senses individually or in combination, and those which are known to the intellect. A few examples of each type demonstrate the range of the

topic. With subject, by contrast, Agricola is mostly involved in defining the topic. Subject is the thing which adjacents inhere in and grow in (75).

Most of what is included in these seven topics could have come under Cicero's topic of adjuncts. By splitting it up in this way, Agricola has been able to show that a variety of relationships can be drawn on, and has been able to classify them in different degrees of firmness. This has led to many possible connections becoming available for use in argument. Vague topics like these are especially helpful in thinking about objects for which one does not have the exact knowledge implied by topics like definition, genus and cause. They bring many more facets of the object under consideration, and this allows the object to be considered less taxonomically, more as it can be perceived. Further acquaintance with an object may suggest that something at first classified as adjacent or *connexa* ought in fact to be treated under one of the topics which imply more complete understanding (such as cause or effect, for example).

### *Conclusion*

Agricola sets out the differences between the topics very carefully. He spends a good deal of time elucidating exactly what he means by a particular topic relation. He explains and exemplifies the distinctions within each topic more fully and more carefully than his predecessors, so as to lay out the resources more carefully for the use of the reader. He generally gives advice on when and how to use a particular topic. Most importantly he analyses situations in the world or examples from classical authors to illustrate the nature, use and effect of particular topics.

In his practice the topics are not a grid constraining relations between different objects to provide proofs down similar lines, they are signposts to a consideration of a particular thing or a particular expression, and it is from the case given, not the general rule posited, that Agricola makes his argument. But it is a two way process, for the investigation of particulars in their own terms refines the way the distinctions are made. The topic helps us look at the thing; looking at the thing helps us to refine and elaborate the point of view on objects offered by the topic. Agricola's sense of the different possibilities within each topic turns him against anything so apparently uniform and inflexible as the maxims.

Agricola's topics are full of interesting observations about writing, about things in the world and about passages from literature: the perception of how causes interact in a particular case, the discussion of the effect of comparison on a reader or the explanation of how a passage from the

*Aeneid* functions. In that sense they transcend their function as part of a textbook, and as a guide to a system for thinking, and become a record of thoughts and readings and an encouragement to the reader in forming his or her own.

This contrasts strikingly with the ordinary view of the topics as some sort of verbal machine for generating arguments. The possibility of using the topics as a machine continues, and the succession of operations is described with great care, but Agricola's treatment also makes them more flexible, more diverse, and more capable of a kind of dialogue with the objects they seek to understand; in the same way as some of the tools of manual work take on the impress of the materials they have worked, and, in a sense, also the personality of their user. It seems to me that almost anyone could learn something about reading and about thinking from Agricola's topics. In my experience the precepts, the analyses and the records of his own perceptions contained in them continue to be surprising and instructive even after several readings.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### DIALECTICAL INVENTION

When Agricola entitles his book *De inventione dialectica* he means to recall Cicero, whose youthful *De inventione* he will now rewrite as dialectic, and to delimit the subject of his book. Within dialectic he will be concerned with the invention of material, the part Cicero said was neglected,<sup>1</sup> rather than with the judgement of argumentative structures. Although invention and the topics remain the core of Agricola's book, the later sections include material which other writers treated as part of judgement and even of rhetoric. When he is reflecting on his subject Agricola often discusses dialectic rather than restricting himself to dialectical invention.

He attempts a definition of dialectic in the second chapter of book two. After he has defended dialectic's right to be considered an art (191-192), he opens his main discussion by considering the purpose of language.

At the beginning we said that all language has the object that someone should make someone else share in his or her thoughts. Therefore it is apparent that there should be three things in every speech: the speaker, the hearer, and the subject-matter. Consequently there are three points to be observed in speaking: that what the speaker intends should be understood, that the person addressed should listen avidly, and that what is said should be plausible and should be believed. Grammar, which passes on the method of speaking correctly and clearly, teaches the first. The second is taught by rhetoric, which provides embellishments and elegance of language, and all the baits for capturing ears. Dialectic consequently seems to claim for itself what is left, that is, to speak convincingly (*probabiliter*) on whatever matter is included in a speech. So, if we are prepared to acknowledge the truth, whatever pertains to invention will be part of dialectic.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> *Topica*, 2.6.

<sup>2</sup> *DID*, p. 192: 'Orationem omnem initio diximus in id paratam esse, ut animi sui participem quisque faceret alium. Tria ergo constat in omni oratione esse oportere, eum qui dicit, eum qui audit, et rem de qua habetur oratio, tresque proinde in dicendo observationes: ut percipi possit quid sibi velit qui dicit; ut cupide audiat cui dicitur; ut probabile sit, habeaturque fides ei, quod dicitur. Primum grammaticae docet, quae emendata et aperte loquendi viam tradit. Proximum rhetorice, quae ornatum orationis cultumque et omnes capiendarum aurium illecebras invenit. Quod reliquum igitur est, videbitur sibi dialectice vendicare, probabiliter dicere de qualibet re, quae deducitur in orationem. Itaque quaecunque ad inventionem pertinebunt, huius (si verum fateri volumus) erunt negotii.' Compare

In this passage Agricola uses the three elements of the act of communication to divide language among the three arts of the *trivium*. Aristotle had begun his *Rhetoric* by using a similar division (speaker, audience and discourse) to introduce his three types of proof (*ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*).<sup>3</sup> Agricola goes on to present his definition of dialectic, 'the art of discoursing convincingly (*probabiliter*) on any given matter, so far as its nature can be found capable of conviction'.<sup>4</sup>

Three points emerge from these quotations. First we notice the very limited role which Agricola gives to rhetoric, restricting it to 'embellishments and elegance of language and all the baits for capturing ears'. Secondly we observe the close connection which Agricola maintains between dialectic and real language. We saw in chapter six above that he began the whole work by talking about the functions and purposes of language (1). Thirdly the key word for Agricola's understanding of dialectic appears to be *probabiliter*.

#### *The meaning of probabiliter*

What does Agricola mean by *probabiliter*? The Latin word *probabilis* has a strand of meaning connected with approving, and a strand, with which we are concerned here, connected with proving. In this latter group of senses the word can be used to mean that something is plausible, credible, or believable, that it is capable of proof or demonstrable, or that it has the appearance of truth, that it is likely, or probable in the modern sense.<sup>5</sup> Agricola's own discussion of the meaning of *probabilis* begins with an examination of Aristotle's view. Aristotle wanted to make a sharp distinction between dialectic, concerned with probable reasoning, and demonstration, which aimed to produce scientific truth. In his view ἔνδοξα or generally accepted opinions are what is believed by all, or by most, or by the wise, either all the wise, or most of them, or the most tested and esteemed of them.<sup>6</sup> Aristotle's classification of accepted opinions depends on the authority or the number of the people holding them. Many of Aristotle's own works begin with a critical review of earlier opinions which

---

*Institutio oratoria*, 3.8.15.

<sup>3</sup> *Rhetic*, 1356a1-3.

<sup>4</sup> *DID*, p. 193: 'ars probabiliter de qualibet re proposita disserendi, prout cuiusque natura capax esse fidei poterit.'

<sup>5</sup> These senses come from P. G. W. Glare ed., *Oxford Latin Dictionary* (Oxford, 1982), p. 1464.

<sup>6</sup> *Topica*, 100b20-22. The concept of probability in *Rhetic* and *Poetics* is discussed in S. Halliwell, *Aristotle's Poetics* (London, 1986), pp. 100-102.

results in the establishment of principles from which demonstration can proceed.<sup>7</sup>

Agricola states that he takes *probabilis* in a slightly different sense. 'For us the *probabile* will be what can be said suitably and fittingly (*apte consentaneaque*) about the subject proposed'.<sup>8</sup> And a little later,

Dialectic will be concerned with speaking convincingly (*probabiliter*), and *probabile* will mean whatever can be said as suitably as possible (*quam aptissime*) for creating belief, according to the situation of the thing proposed.<sup>9</sup>

Agricola offers some glosses on the two terms *aptus* and *consentaneus*. In the discussion of the topics in his preface, Agricola claimed that the topics were 'like signposts by whose prompting we are enabled to turn our minds around the things themselves and perceive whatever in each of them is convincing and suitable (*probabile aptumque*) for what our speech sets out to teach'.<sup>10</sup> In this sentence the aptness of what is found seems to arise from its source in the topics and from the judgement that it is suitable for the point of view one is arguing.

The second word on which Agricola's extension of the notion of *probabile* is based is 'agreeing' (*consentaneus*). He gives an exposition of this term in the second chapter of book one (What is a topic?). He explains that the analogy from measuring (discussed in chapter 7 above) can be applied to things agreeing (*consentanea*).

I call things agreeing, things of which one can be said about the other. For example man and substance agree in animal, because every animal is a substance and every man is an animal; therefore it follows that these agree among themselves, that is, every man is a substance.<sup>11</sup>

It is very striking and rather surprising that Agricola should illustrate his concept of things agreeing with a standard example of a syllogism, the first

<sup>7</sup> *Topica*, 100a20-101b5. J. D. G. Evans, *Aristotle's Concept of Dialectic* (Cambridge, 1977), pp. 5, 7, 35, 92.

<sup>8</sup> *DID*, p.192: 'in his igitur abunde nobis erit probabile, quod apte consentaneaque de re proposita dicetur.'

<sup>9</sup> *DID*, p. 193: 'Probabiliter ergo dicere dialectices erit, et probabile quod pro conditione rei propositae, quam aptissime ad fidem dicetur.' Text corrected according to *DID*, p. 195.

<sup>10</sup> *DID*, p. 2: 'quorum admonitu, velut signis quibusdam, circunferremus per ipsas res animum, et quid esset in unaquaque probabile aptumque instituto orationis nostrae perspiceremus.'

<sup>11</sup> *DID*, pp. 7-8: 'Consentanea autem voco, quorum possit alterum de altero dici, ut homini et substantiae convenit in animali, quoniam omne animal est substantia, et omnis homo est animal; sequitur ergo convenire ipsis inter se, hoc est, omnem hominem esse substantiam.'

mood of the first figure. This argument would be regarded as universally true. At the very least it illustrates the way in which the idea of probabilism tends to be expressed in terms which are more appropriate to necessary arguments. It also implies that the *probabile* or convincing includes arguments which are certain. The main point for my argument here is that things agreeing are found through the topics and can be expressed as syllogisms. Both the terms through which Agricola develops the idea of the *probabile* connect it with the procedure of topical invention and with the structures of argument.

There is a further passage which is helpful in determining the sense in which Agricola uses the term *probabiliter*. It occurs in his discussion of the subject-matter of dialectic. The subject-matter of dialectic must be whatever one can speak *probabiliter* about. One can speak *probabiliter* about whatever is included in a speech, 'either actually probably, or as far as the matter of which we speak allows'.<sup>12</sup> The way the phrase 'actually probably' (*revera probabiliter*) is used seems to imply that 'convincingly' is the sense required here. Either one will speak convincingly or one will do the best one can with the material available. So the subject-matter of dialectic is whatever one can speak convincingly (or as nearly convincingly as the matter allows) about. It is as though he wants to write 'whatever one can speak about' but is frightened by the expansion of the subject that would involve. Dialectic is not to concern itself with all speaking, but with speaking convincingly on all subjects.

At this point one might approach this question from the opposite direction, to ask what is included in speaking *probabiliter*. In chapter six of book two, while he is worrying through the problem of the subject-matter of dialectic, Agricola suggests a broadening of the notion of *probabile*.

But if we say that the provable (*probabile*) is not only what can be said ambiguously and on both sides, but that the more certain anything is the more provable it is, and that what is undoubted would seem to be the most provable of all, then all arts of every kind will be made up of provable things.<sup>13</sup>

In this passage the *probabile* undoubtedly includes what is certain. Those bodies of knowledge which have been codified into sciences are at least as

---

<sup>12</sup> *DID*, p. 206: 'aut revera probabiliter, aut quatenus res de qua dicimus permittit.'

<sup>13</sup> *DID*, p. 207: 'Quod si probabile dicimus, non modo quod ambigue et in utranque partem dici potest, sed ut quo certius quicque est eo probabilius sit, et quod indubitatum sit id maxime videatur probabile, omnes artes quaecunque demum sunt ex probabilibus constabunt.'

useful in persuading an audience as debatable issues. So where dialectic previously focussed on the topics, and was particularly applicable to subjects not passed on in textbooks, now it also includes organised bodies of knowledge. Later in the same argument he attempts to clarify his notion of dialectic, this time taking dialectic as a help to the other arts.

Dialectic teaches the method of speaking convincingly (*probabiliter*), that is, it is merely the instrument for judging true and false, by the use and help of which all practitioners of the different subjects can more easily find out what is true and false in their own subject-matter.<sup>14</sup>

Here, although he is making a distinction between dialectic's assisting role and the actual judgements made in the particular subjects, Agricola is quite prepared to speak of true and false in relation to dialectic.<sup>15</sup> In his topic entry for contingents, Agricola decides to include the signs of things (such as red sky at night presaging good weather the next day, or smoke indicating fire) among contingents.

Quintilian thought that these should not be placed among the arguments because they left no room for doubt. But I am astonished that such a very intelligent man could have thought that. For in that case none of the things by which the mathematicians prove their propositions would be arguments since they demonstrate everything with reasons which are certain and about which there can be no dispute. And since what we are trying to do in arguing is to leave as little room as possible for doubt, how can it be that what brings one to something evident and indubitable can be considered not to have been argued.<sup>16</sup>

In fact Quintilian's second argument against including the signs (his first had been that they were inartificial proofs) was based on a dilemma. Either the signs are reliable, in which case there is no room for question and hence no need to argue, or they are doubtful, in which case they need other

<sup>14</sup> *DID*, p. 210: 'Dialectice disserendi probabiliter rationem tradit, hoc est, instrumentum tantum veri falsique discernendi, cuius usu ministerioque expeditius cuncti artifices, quid veri aut falsi sit in rebus sibi propositis, explorent.'

<sup>15</sup> When the preface speaks of creating belief about things which are in doubt or bringing in something better known, the end result or the basis for the argument would seem to be better than probable. *DID*, p. 2.

<sup>16</sup> *DID*, pp. 112-113: 'Ea Quintilianus inter argumenta non putat habenda quia nihil post se dubii relinquant. Quod quidem acutissimo viro miror potuisse in mentem venire. Ergo sibi nihil eorum, quibus mathematici inventa sua colligunt, argumentum esset, cum certis et de quibus ambigi non possit rationibus omnia demonstret. Cumque id agamus argumentando, ut quamminimum dubitandi reliquam locum qui potest fieri, ut qui ad liquidum indubitatumque rem perduxerit, videatur non esse argumentatus?' I am most grateful to Kees Meerhoff for drawing my attention to this passage, whose significance in this context I had previously missed.

arguments to back them up.<sup>17</sup> Agricola rejects Quintilian's unsound argument and insists that things which are certain are part of the art of proof.

It is clear then that while Agricola defines dialectic as the art of discoursing *probabiliter*, for him the *probabile*, further elaborated as what is suitable and fitting, includes arguments which are certain as well as arguments which are only plausible. Further it seems that the word *probabiliter* refers not so much to the type of material used in arguing, as to the manner in which the argument is carried on, and to its intended effect. In most cases 'convincingly' is the appropriate English translation for Agricola's *probabiliter*. This is also the way in which Cicero uses *probabilis*, when in *De inventione* he defines invention as the discovery of true or true-seeming arguments which make a case convincing.<sup>18</sup>

### *Delimiting Dialectic*

At the beginning of his work, Agricola is anxious to narrow the scope of dialectic. His preface argues that the most basic function of language is teaching, and that the topics are the key to teaching. At this stage dialectic is treated as operating through the topics and as concerned with teaching. This enables Agricola to devote his first book to an extended treatment of the topics.

In books two and three, Agricola presents a view of dialectic which is more expansive. He concedes that some teaching requires no more than a knowledge of the subject to be taught.

But when someone teaches in such a way that he wants to create belief through his speech, and to draw the mind of the hearer to him by what he says, so far as he does that, he is dealing with the business of dialectic.<sup>19</sup>

It would be theoretically possible for someone to communicate what he wants to say merely by speaking correctly and clearly (which belong to grammar) but Agricola insists that the further organisation (linking things together, making a simpler point precede a more complex one), which is used in the practice of teaching, belongs to dialectic. He further distinguishes between clarity of words and clarity of things. If clarity of words involves avoiding incorrect or obscure words or over-involved

<sup>17</sup> *Institutio oratoria*, 5.9.1-2.

<sup>18</sup> *De inventione*, I.7.9: 'Inventio est excogitatio rerum verarum aut veri similium quae causam probabilem reddant.'

<sup>19</sup> *DID*, p. 196: 'Sed qui ita doct, ut fidem fecisse oratione velit, et dicendo auditoris ad se trahere mentem, quatenus id facit dialectici negotium agit.'

constructions, it belongs to grammar. The clarity which is associated with the figures and with embellishment of words belongs to rhetoric.

Clarity of things consists partly in their nature and partly in the way they are handled. In their nature, because some things are by nature more obscure, while others are more open and more exposed to our understanding. This has nothing to do with the technique of speaking because it is brought in to discourse of all kinds with the things themselves.

The other kind of clarity is what we are concerned with in order and in disposing things: because, as something is said before or after, so it adds more or less to the understanding of something else. This belongs to the teaching of dialectic because not only does the order give much help to the understanding of things, but sometimes also the credibility of things depends to a great extent on this very thing.

For just as no one would call anyone a great painter or sculptor who could portray perfectly well each individual limb but did not know how to join them together and arrange them into an attitude so that they would imitate the form of whatever movement or action he wished, in the same way no one will deserve even the name of dialectician who knows how to find all the things which will create belief but does not know how to dispose and order them so as make their intended audience believe them. So the aim of dialectic will be to teach according to the potential of the thing spoken about, that is to find the things suitable for creating belief, and to dispose the things which have been found and order them in the most suitable way for teaching.<sup>20</sup>

Finding the things suitable for creating belief means using the topics, and setting them in order means, on the small scale, exposition and argumentation, and on the large scale, disposition.<sup>21</sup>

In this passage the role dialectic plays in teaching has led to an

---

<sup>20</sup> *DID*, pp. 196-197: 'Rerum autem perspicuitas, partim in natura illarum, partim in tractatu consistit. In natura, quoniam aliae natura obscuriores sunt, aliae apertiores et cognitioni nostrae magis expositae. Ea ad dicendi rationem non pertinet, quoniam cum rebus ipsis in orationem qualiscunque est afferatur. Alia est, quam ordine disponendisque consequimur rebus, quoniam ut aliquid ante posteave dictum est, ita plus minusve intelligendo alteri confert. Haec ex dialectici est institutis, quoniam non modo percipiendis rebus ordo plurimum praebet adiumenti, sed nonnunquam etiam fides earum magna ex parte huic ipsis est innixa. Quemadmodum enim nemo pictorem quempiam aut factorem consummatum dixerit, qui omnia quidem seorsum membra exacte exprimeret, iungere autem ea nesciret et in eam habitudinem componere, ut motus aut actus alicuius quam vellet imaginem imitarentur. Sic ne dialectici quidem nomen sibi vendicabit, qui omnia facienda fidei invenire sciat, sed disponere et in ordinem redigere, ut fidem cui destinantur facere possint, nesciat. Hic itaque finis erit dialectices, docere pro facultate rei de qua disseritur, id est, invenire quae fidei facienda sint apta et inventa disponere, atque ut ad docendum quam accommodatissima sint ordinare.' The idea of persuasion through the ordering of things may have something in common with the ordering of tragic action envisaged in Aristotle's *Poetics*, S. Halliwell, *Aristotle's Poetics*, pp. 101-104.

<sup>21</sup> In Agricola's *Oratio in laudem philosophiae* (1476), disposition was said to belong to rhetoric, invention to dialectic. *Lucubrations*, 1539, p. 151.

expansion of its concerns, from a preoccupation with the topics to dealing with exposition, argumentation and disposition. In book two emotional manipulation is brought within the control of dialectical invention, and in book three pleasing, amplification, *copia* and brevity are added.<sup>22</sup> In terms of syllabus then, Agricola's dialectical invention has a tendency to expand, taking over the thinking and planning aspects of language use, and leaving only the tropes and figures to rhetoric, and the details of the proposition and the forms of the syllogism to dialectical judgement.

But the scope of dialectic is also a philosophical problem, because there is a danger that dialectic (just like rhetoric) will claim to teach all subjects, will consequently have no definable subject-matter of its own, and will therefore become vulnerable to the kinds of argument that Plato used against the Sophists, especially in *Gorgias*.<sup>23</sup> In his discussion of the subject-matter of dialectic, Agricola tries to delimit dialectic by suggesting that it is applicable only to cases in which there is doubt.

Therefore everything about which one can speak in an orderly manner and in a way suited to produce belief will be the subject matter of dialectic. If we wish to sum this up in one word it will not be difficult. It must be true of everything about which we try to create belief, that it is received with a certain doubt or lack of certainty: for no one undertakes to teach something which is evident, in so far as it is evident, but in so far as it is subject to contention or doubt. People call whatever is put forward as being in some way in doubt a question. Therefore the question is the subject-matter of dialectic.<sup>24</sup>

Dialectic must deal with what is in doubt, since everything we try to persuade people about must be in doubt, otherwise there would be no need to persuade them. But, in this case, who is in doubt about the thing in question? Surely it must be the people listening, before the speech is made. This explanation at least leaves open the possibility that the speaker is not in doubt, and that the intention is to remove the audience's doubts in the course of the speech. Agricola identifies the subject-matter of dialectic with what is in question in order to leave dialectic with a broad but not infinite territory in which to operate. He is concerned to avoid the accusation that

<sup>22</sup> See chapter 10 below.

<sup>23</sup> *Gorgias*, 449a-454c, compare *Protagoras*, 312d-313c, 318a-320b.

<sup>24</sup> *DID*, pp. 206-207: 'Omne igitur id, de quo ordine apteque ad fidem dici potest, id erit dialectices materia. Quod si uno nomine complecti volumus haud erit difficile. De quoconque enim fidem conatur facere, id necesse est accipi tanquam dubium incertumque sit; nemo enim rem apertam, quatenus est aperta, sumit docendam, sed ut contendi de ea et ambigi possit. Quicquid autem tanquam dubitatum in medium profertur, id vocant quaestionem. Erit ergo quaestio materia dialectices.'

dialectic trespasses on other subjects (207). The things about which there is agreement will belong to their specific arts (210).<sup>25</sup>

This position is comparable to the argument which Quintilian uses in his attempt to exclude the signs from rhetoric. In that instance, as we have seen, Agricola argued that the aim of making an argument was, as far as possible, to eliminate doubt.<sup>26</sup> So the doubt that defines the limit of what is arguable must sometimes be a provisional doubt on the part of the audience, not always an absolute uncertainty which everyone feels about the proposition in question.

Agricola also considers Aristotle's approach to the problem. Aristotle restricts dialectic to issues which have not been determined by the particular sciences and on which there is something to be said on both sides. He assigns the development of sciences to demonstration, finding dialectic useful mainly for practice in arguing, for attacking other people's views and for establishing principles from which a science can begin (207-208). Agricola rejects this view. He insists that it is part of the role of dialectic to teach the separate sciences how to find their materials. For him there is no difference in method between the teacher and the debater. Debaters, he assures us, only attempt to confuse their opponents when they cannot directly prove what they are arguing for (211-212).

So if anyone contends with an opponent who is skilled in all manner of deceptions and against whom cunning is no use, he should certainly return to the matter itself. If it is dealt with under any of the arts, we shall take arguments from the very things which are said about it in the arts.<sup>27</sup>

He gives three examples of philosophical controversies in which the participants fetched the basis for, and strength of, their arguments from things included in established treatments of those subjects.

If (as we have tried to show previously) the task of dialectic is to speak convincingly (*probabiliter*), then it will be legitimate and greatly in keeping with the teaching of dialectic to speak convincingly also about those subjects on which very certain and clearly perceived things can be said, even if they are taken from the standard treatments of some subject. In the next place will be those things which are most closely joined to these. Underhand and deceitful arguments no more result from the techniques of

<sup>25</sup> Or one could argue that the subject matters of particular arts are included in the things about which one can speak 'ordine apteque ad fidem'.

<sup>26</sup> See note 16 above.

<sup>27</sup> *DID*, p. 212: 'Si quis igitur cum eo adversario contulit pedem, qui sit captionum omnium peritus et contra quem nihil proficiant astus, redeundum est nimirum ad rem ipsam, quae si artibus comprehensa sit, ex his ipsis utique quae artibus de ipsa traduntur argumenta ducemus.'

dialectic than monsters and diseases are the consequence of the fundamental basis of nature.<sup>28</sup>

There are things which are fixed and agreed, and in Agricola's view such things are part of speaking convincingly, and fall within the province of dialectic. Although dialectic must start by examining propositions which are in doubt, it aims, by drawing on fixed or authoritative statements, to reach the truth about its initial propositions, as far as possible. Agricola particularly emphasizes that the debater and the textbook writer use the same topics and the same techniques of argument, and that there is hence no separate science of demonstration.<sup>29</sup>

The best he can do to delimit dialectic is to fall back on its function as a method for the other subjects.<sup>30</sup> Dialectic helps to constitute the other arts by teaching the general principles of arguing and organising, by teaching the other arts what questions to ask, but leaving it to them to discover the answers.

We should therefore understand that the subject-matter of dialectic is everything concerning which one speaks convincingly, that is, as we have suggested, every question, whatever in the last analysis it may be. We must, however, remember that the things concerning which and using which we speak, are taken from the individual arts, while the order and method of speaking belongs to dialectic.<sup>31</sup>

### *Was Agricola a Sceptic?*

Cicero had defined argument, in his late work *Partitiones oratoriae* as 'probabile inventum ad faciendam fidem',<sup>32</sup> something plausible discovered for the purpose of causing belief. As an Academic sceptic Cicero believed

<sup>28</sup> *DID*, p. 212: 'Ut finem ergo faciam, si (quemadmodum prius ostendere conati sumus) dialectices officium est probabiliter dicere, ut de quoque certissima et percepta maxime dicentur, licet ex mediis deducta sunt artibus, ita maxime ex dialectices instituto iureque fiet. Proximo loco erunt, quae ad haec arctissime accident. Subdola vero et captiosa non magis ex dialectices sunt ratione, quam monstra morbique ex constitutione naturae.'

<sup>29</sup> *DID*, p. 211: 'Ex eisdem enim locis hauriunt utraque haec argumenta, eadem expendendorum argumentorum utrisque est via.' Conversely Agricola admits that where certainty is not available one will have to make do with what is nearest to certainty. In I, 5 he explained that we often have to consider as true things which seem to come nearest to being true. *DID*, p. 26: 'habere autem nos (quod fere in reliquis rebus facere solemus) pro vera, quae proxima verae videtur accedere.'

<sup>30</sup> See note 14 above.

<sup>31</sup> *DID*, p. 212: 'Materiam igitur dialectices sciamus omne id esse de quo probabiliter est disserere, hoc est, quod proposuimus, quaestio omnis, quaecunque demum ea sit. Dum tamen meminerimus res et de quibus et per quas disserimus, ex singulis cuiusque artibus sumi, disserendi autem ordinem rationemque ad dialecticen pertinere.'

<sup>32</sup> *Partitiones oratoriae*, 2.6.

that, in the absence of certainty, the best one could hope for was an argument with a high degree of likelihood, or an argument that was *verisimile*, like the truth. Scholars who have looked into the question think that Agricola's use of terms like *probabilis*, *probabiliter*, *fidem facere*, and his citation of Cicero's definition mean that he too was an Academic sceptic.<sup>33</sup> My opinion is that Agricola was not a sceptic in the strict sense, in that, although he believed that most things are not certain, for him the *probabile* included the certain. In support of this view I would cite several of the passages above which show him treating certain arguments as part of the *probabile*, and in which he speaks of things being true or certain.<sup>34</sup> Further I would argue that his uses of the terms *probabile* and *probabiliter* have to do with the dialectical way of arguing, using the topics and the forms of arguments, rather than with the quality of the premisses.<sup>35</sup> Agricola does not doubt the evidence of his senses. He calls conclusions about universals 'verisimile', but is then rather definite about the existence of similarities in the world corresponding to words like 'man' and 'white'.<sup>36</sup> However there are also passages in which Agricola speaks directly of the sceptics, which need to be examined in discussing this question.

In the preface, in order to emphasize the wide applicability of dialectic, he draws attention to the fact that there are a large number of things which are not completely certain.

This method of the topics appears to be useful since it applies to a great part of human studies (seeing that most of them remain in uncertainty and are subject to debate among those who hold differing views. A very small portion of what we know is certain and unalterable, so that, if we believe the Academy, we only know that we know nothing. Certainly many things are treated in different ways by different people according to the ingenuity of each, as each can think of reasons most suited to proof). This applies especially to those who handle those things concerning which no organised bodies of learning are taught. I mean those who determine state affairs with their counsel, those who try to persuade either the senate or the people,

<sup>33</sup> This point of view is put forward in L. Jardine, 'Lorenzo Valla and the intellectual origins of humanist dialectic', *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 15 (1977), pp. 143-163, revised as 'Lorenzo Valla: Academic Skepticism and the New Humanist Dialectic', in M. Burnyeat ed., *The Skeptical Tradition* (Berkeley, 1983), pp. 253-286. A modern definition of scepticism is given by M. Burnyeat, 'Can the Sceptic live his Scepticism?', in M. Schofield et al, *Doubt and Dogmatism* (Oxford, 1980), pp. 20-53 (23-25).

<sup>34</sup> See notes 11, 13-16, 27 and 28 above.

<sup>35</sup> See the discussion of *probabiliter* above.

<sup>36</sup> *DID*, pp. 37-41. H. A. G. Braakhuis, 'Agricola's view on universals', in *Rodolphus Agricola Phrisius*, pp. 239-247.

about peace and war, and the other pressing business of a city; those who accuse, defend, petition and deny in the courts, and those who have the job of teaching the people justice, religion and piety.<sup>37</sup>

In chapter six of book two, while explaining that some people would object that his view of the subject-matter of dialectic is too broad and will lead to dialectic taking over all other subjects, he comments:

For almost everyone speaks *probabiliter* on the subject which they have undertaken to teach. For there is not a great supply of things known to us which can be necessary and undoubted: and, if we believe the Academy, nothing at all. No one denies this about things which belong to life and to norms of behaviour. Similarly, in what belongs to the knowledge of the nature of things, there is nothing which is not argued about and debated on all sides with great ingenuity. On all these subjects, then, probable things are discussed as best one can, since necessary things cannot be. If probable things could not be discussed, no one would either learn or teach those subjects.<sup>38</sup>

In both these passages the aim is to emphasize that there are many subjects on which there is no certainty. But that much would be agreed by many ancient authors, including Aristotle.<sup>39</sup> In such cases the best one can do is to argue convincingly. If there was no possibility of arguing convincingly, there would be no point in trying to teach anything about the subjects in which there is no certainty. In both passages Agricola refers to the sceptics' belief that uncertainty is universal, but in both cases the way in which he introduces the reference to the sceptics suggests that his own position may be more moderate than theirs. The second quotation offers a clear example of *probabilia* used in opposition to certainty, rather than in the inclusive

<sup>37</sup> *DID*, p. 2: 'Utilem autem esse hanc locorum rationem appareat, cum magnae parti humanorum studiorum (quandoquidem plaeraque in ambiguo haerent, et dissentientium certaminibus sunt exposita. Exigua enim portio eorum quae discimus certa et immota est, adeoque si Academiae credimus, hoc solum scimus quod nihil scimus. Certe plaeraque pro cuiusque ingenio, ut accommodatissime ad probandum quisque excogitare potuerit, alio atque alio trahuntur) tum vero eis praecipue confert, qui tractant illa, quorum nullae traditae sunt artes, dico, qui consilio Rempublicam gubernant, quos de pace, bello, caeterisque civitatis negotiis in rem praesentem, saepe senatui, saepe populo fidem facere oportet, quique in iudiciis item accusare, defendere, petere, abnuere, quique populum docere iusticiam, religionem, pietatem, in professo habent.'

<sup>38</sup> *DID*, p. 207: 'Omnes enim propemodum probabiliter de eo quod docendum sumpserunt, disserunt. Nam eorum, quae necessaria et indubitata esse possint, a nobis comprehendi non ita magna est copia, et (si Academiae credimus) prorsus nulla. Id quod nemo negat, quae ad vitam moresque pertinent; quae item ad rerum naturae notitiam, nihil est quod non sit controversum et magnis ingenii omnes in partes iactatum. De his ergo omnibus probabilia utcunque disseruntur, quoniam necessaria non possunt. Nam sine probabilia quidem possent, nemo vel disseret ea vel doceret.' (with correction from b4v).

<sup>39</sup> *Rhetic*, 1357a22ff.

way in which related words seem to be used elsewhere, but this passage is immediately followed by one already cited in which things which are undoubtedly said to be the most convincing of all.<sup>40</sup>

In his discussion of *probabile* in the second chapter of book two, Agricola cites some examples of works in which things are said which could never be true, and which no one would believe: Apuleius's *Golden Ass* and Lucian's *True History*.

I am aware that something can even be said in a way that is actually convincing (*revera probabiliter*) about things of the kind which are completely opposed, not just to our belief in things, but even to possibility: as Lucian on whether men can be changed into birds, and in Macrobius on whether the egg or the hen existed first. Whichever side you take on these, it will appear incredible; both, however, are discussed in a credible way. For, that good and bad are the same, which Heraclitus and some after him said, and that nothing can be known, said by the new Academy, and many other well known things of the same kind, are not only said credibly by some people but they also have great authors who believe them. Therefore dialectic will be speaking convincingly (*probabiliter*), and the probable will be whatever, according to the condition of the thing proposed, may be said as suitably as possible for creating belief.<sup>41</sup>

Agricola concedes that very strange things can be maintained in a credible manner, and that even stranger stories which no one actually believes can be told in a convincing manner. Here the belief accurately attributed to the sceptics (that nothing can be known) is among the unbelievable things which can be maintained convincingly. In this passage surely Agricola is paying tribute to the dialectical skill of the new Academy while indicating that he finds their belief not only unacceptable but absurd.

Some of his remarks in favour of the *probabile* seem to be intended to create space for dialectic by restricting the domains of the established arts. The more the separate arts can claim to have demonstrated, the less there is for argument to resolve, and the more vulnerable dialectic is to the argument that it has no field of its own and that it should give way to the

---

<sup>40</sup> See note 13 above.

<sup>41</sup> *DID*, p. 193: 'Non quod nesciam posse etiam revera probabiliter de re eiusmodi dici, quae non solum a fide rerum sed facultate etiam abhorreat, ut Lucianus idem, possintne homines in aves mutari, et apud Macrobius, fuerint prius ovum an gallina, quorum utrumvis sumas, incredibile videtur, de utroque credibiliter tamen disseritur. Nam bonum et malum idem esse quod Heraclitus quodque post eum alii, et nihil sciri posse, quod nova Academia dixit, permultaque alia eiusdem notae, non solum qui credibiliter dicerent, sed maximos autores qui crederent ista haberant. Probabiliter ergo dicere dialectices erit, et probabile quod pro conditione rei propositae quam aptissime ad fidem dicetur. Erit ergo nobis hoc pacto definita dialectice, ars probabiliter de qualibet re proposita disserendi, prout cuiusque natura capax esse fidei poterit.'

experts (the argument Socrates used against Gorgias, in effect). This argument restricting the number of things that are already established can also be connected with Agricola's disparagement of natural philosophy and his emphasis on ethics.<sup>42</sup> For him the most important questions are concerned with human conduct. Such ethical issues largely depend on contingent circumstances, and cannot be settled forever by the specialised sciences.

Perhaps the underlying point is that Agricola is really not a philosopher at all, in spite of his philosophical training and his admiration for certain philosophers.<sup>43</sup> He does not aim to teach an attitude to life, as the sceptics do, rather he aims to develop certain skills in thinking, writing and reading.

### *The Question*

On the theoretical level Agricola defines the subject-matter of dialectic as whatever is in doubt. On the practical level dialectic begins its work from the question which is put. Agricola uses the question as a heading under which to collect elements from the traditional syllabus of rhetoric and dialectic, and as the starting point for the practice of invention. After (1) proposing a new definition of 'question' to replace Boethius's (book 2, chapter 8) Agricola (2) considers three ways in which questions can be classified, together with (3) elements of the theory of the proposition (chapters 9-11). Then he explains (4) how to work from the given subject of an oration or discussion to the key propositions which will be argued out using topical invention (chapters 12-14). The fourth section is the most important for Agricola's project as a whole. But the rather confused structure of the preceding chapters needs to be unravelled first.

#### *1. Definition of the Question*

Agricola criticizes Boethius's definition of question as 'a proposition which may be doubted',<sup>44</sup> on the grounds that many propositions which may be doubted are not questions. He prefers the definition 'statement expressed through inquiry' to which he later adds 'which can be answered positively or negatively' ('*oratio per interrogationem elata, cui esse vel non, potest*

<sup>42</sup> *DID*, pp. 72, 441. *Lucubrationes*, p. 155.

<sup>43</sup> Although Plato and Aristotle seem to be his model philosophers, there are also two favourable references to Scotus. *DID*, pp. 397, 441; 155, 306.

<sup>44</sup> *PL* 64, 1048D, *DID*, p. 221: 'dubitabilem propositionem', *PL* 64, 1174B: 'Quaestio est in dubitationem ambiguatemque adducta propositio, ut si quis quaerat an coelum sit volubile.' Aristotle has a similar definition, *Topica*, 101b27-33. Both these latter definitions are proof against the attack Agricola makes on the former one, which Boethius goes on to explain in a way that meets Agricola's objections.

responderi').<sup>45</sup> He uses this definition to argue that Aristotle's four kinds of question (does it exist? what is it? in what way is it? what is its cause?)<sup>46</sup> are not questions but ways of questioning. In conclusion he adds that the question at issue in an argument will not be one of Aristotle's first inquiries, since one does not take sides on those, but rather 'a question will be the reply of our opponent, given in the form of a question, when it is called into doubt'.<sup>47</sup> It will be the statement we wish to challenge, cast in the form of a question. In this manoeuvre, by introducing the idea of the clash of assertions, Agricola is using the rhetorical theory of status, which aims to clarify the issue to which all the arguments in a law case or debate must be directed,<sup>48</sup> to bolster his definition of the question and to attack Aristotle's.

## 2. Three Ways of Classifying Questions

### (a) According to the things asked about

Agricola gives two versions of a basic threefold division of all questions. The first, which he later ascribes to Cicero, sets out these three kinds: *an sit* (does it exist?), *quid sit* (what is it?) *quale sit* (in what way is it?). Agricola glosses these questions as asking about existence, about substance, and about things around or outside the substance, respectively (222).

In the second version, which, since it is compatible and later, I treat as Agricola's view, the simple question falls into three kinds: *an sit*, *an res sit illud* (is the thing that?), and *quomodo hoc sit illud* (in what way is this thing that?). To this last question there are four kinds of possible answer: as definition and thing defined, as genus and species, as property and subject, and as accident and subject. This last type of question includes the questions previously classified under *quid sit* (definition) and *quale sit* (other relations) (227-228). This new division brings to the fore the conflict of positions implicit in each type of question. We can argue about whether *x* exists, about whether statement 'y' is applicable to *x*, and about what sort of relationship holds between object *x* and statement 'y'.

---

<sup>45</sup> *DID*, pp. 221, 226.

<sup>46</sup> This is the traditional way of understanding *Posterior Analytics*, 89b25, but modern commentators interpret it differently, J. Barnes, *Aristotle's Posterior Analytics* (Oxford, 1975), pp. 194-195.

<sup>47</sup> *DID*, pp. 227: 'Non igitur quaestiones sunt primae interrogations illae, quando nequit de eis vel in hanc vel in aliam partem dici, sed responsum adversarii, interrogatori datum, cum in dubium vocatur, sit quaestio.'

<sup>48</sup> *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, 1.10.18-15.25, *De inventione*, 1.8.10-13.18, *Partitiones oratoriae*, 29.101-31.108, *Institutio oratoria*, 3.6, 7.2-10.

The practical point which Agricola is concerned to make with this distinction is that the kind of answer which is appropriate to a question depends to some extent on the level at which a question is being asked. 'Rational animal' is not the only answer to the question 'what is a man?', but in many argumentative contexts it is the only appropriate answer.

Agricola makes a deliberate and strong distinction between the kinds of question examined by the philosophers and the types of status analysed by the rhetoricians. He argues with examples that all three types of rhetorical status found in legal cases are aspects of quality (*quale sit?*), in terms of the broader classification of possible questions made by the philosophers. He points out that what the rhetoricians call a conjectural issue, 'did Milo kill Clodius?' for example, is considerably subsequent to more broad and basic questions like 'does Milo exist?' and 'is this man Milo?' (223-224). Agricola insists on the difference between the general, almost metaphysical, questions which philosophers ask about things in general, and the much more context bound questions which dominate the kinds of forensic oratory. In making this distinction he disagrees with Cicero and Quintilian, who use the three (or four) general questions to underpin their account of the types of question to be confronted in an oration.<sup>49</sup> But he does so quite consciously and his position seems be correct.<sup>50</sup>

Although he makes this distinction, Agricola himself sometimes uses the specialised rhetorical theory of status to clarify the general nature of the question (as he does when he criticizes Aristotle's classification of questions and adds to his own definition of the question, as we saw above).

While he is setting out these three types of question according to the thing being asked about, Agricola also explains the difference between simple and compound propositions, discusses different answers to questions in *qualis* and *quid*, and distinguishes quality as a kind of question from quality in the categories.<sup>51</sup> This is also the section in which he reworks his definition of question, while criticising Aristotle's fourfold division of questions.

*(b) According to the Ways of Asking*

In chapter ten, Agricola distinguishes two general ways of asking: predicative (or categorical), such as 'should the state be governed?', and

<sup>49</sup> *Orator*, 14.45, *Institutio oratoria*, 3.6.23-24,44, *RDP*, pp. 243-244, 496-497.

<sup>50</sup> *DID*, pp. 222-223: 'Quod autem Cicero tria haec quaestionum genera de civilibus rebus disserenti subiecit, non satis exacta ratione videtur factum.'

<sup>51</sup> *DID*, pp. 226-229.

conditional (or hypothetical), such as 'should the state be governed, if the world is not ruled by providence?'. The truth of predicative questions is determined on the basis of the nature of the thing asked about. The truth of conditional questions depends on the connection between the condition and the assertion (231).

He goes on to claim that the distinction between predicative and conditional questions corresponds to the rhetorical distinction between thesis (general question) and hypothesis (question attached to particular circumstances). He argues that in questions involving particular individuals, various implicit conditions are attached to the question. Thus in discussing 'should Cato marry?' one would have to consider the implied question 'should a man marry, if he is a Stoic philosopher?' (232-234)

Although it is true that an individual case involves many such conditions, and even, as Agricola goes on to say, that in a predicative question conditional arguments are often employed, conditional questions are not quite the same as hypotheses (in the rhetorical sense). In a hypothesis, it may be a relevant argument that the subject is a Stoic philosopher, but there may be other conditions or arguments which outweigh it. Furthermore, the truth conditions of hypotheses differ from those of conditional questions. In a conditional question, the truth or falsehood of an answer depends on the strength of the connection between condition and assertion. In a predicative question of any kind (including the question involving particular circumstances which the rhetoricians call a hypothesis), the key remains the resolution of that particular question, not the strength of its connection with any implied condition. All the same, provided they are not treated as identical, the idea that there is a similarity between hypotheses and conditional questions may be helpful in invention.

In the course of his discussion, Agricola shows that conditional questions can be simple or compound, pure or modal. He sets out the four types of modal proposition. He also argues that hypotheses are not universally or solely the concern of rhetoric.<sup>52</sup>

*(c) According to the Kinds of Art*

The third division of questions, considered in chapter eleven of book two, is a division according to the different kinds of art they belong to. The arts, and the questions, are concerned with knowledge (speculative), action (practical), or reasoning (logical) (237). Agricola insists that these three

---

<sup>52</sup> *DID*, pp. 231, 234, 232.

ways of dividing questions into classes cannot easily be reduced to one, and he criticizes earlier attempts to reduce the number of types of question.

### *3. Theory of the Proposition*

As part of his discussion of the first of the three divisions of propositions (section 2a above), Agricola introduces the distinction between simple ('is the world eternal?') and compound questions ('is the world eternal and is it made up of individual small bodies?').<sup>53</sup> He divides compound propositions into copulative (joined by 'and') and disjunctive (joined by 'or'). For a copulative proposition to be true, both parts must be true separately. For a disjunctive proposition to be true, only one part need be. He makes a third kind out of the conjunction of partly opposed propositions (for example, 'can some man rest who does not sit down?', 'does Aristotle sometimes argue when he is not walking?'). But he regards copulative and disjunctive as the basic types and refers a full treatment of their conditions of truth to the part of dialectic concerned with judgement.<sup>54</sup>

In the first part of his treatment of categorical and conditional questions, Agricola discusses their truth conditions. Whereas the truth of a categorical proposition depends on the nature of the thing in question, the truth of a conditional proposition depends on the validity of the consequence holding between its two parts (231). This observation is not consistent with the second part of his treatment of the conditional, discussed above.

He makes a further distinction in the way of asking questions, between those questions which are asked purely, or concerning actual inference, and those which are asked with respect to the modes of possibility, necessity, contingency and impossibility. He gives examples of predicative and conditional modal propositions and begins to discuss their truth conditions, but he refers a full treatment of modal propositions to the treatise on judgement (234-235). In short, Agricola uses his chapters on the question to summarise a good deal of Aristotelian and Stoic teaching on the nature and kinds of the proposition.

### *4. The Question and Invention*

Every oration or debate must begin from a question which is assigned. This assigned subject is determined by the circumstances in which a speech or an argument is to be made. One of the tasks of the speaker is to work out which key arguments he or she must establish in order to be persuasive on

---

<sup>53</sup> *DID*, p. 227.

<sup>54</sup> *DID*, pp. 229-230.

the larger question. In chapters twelve to fourteen Agricola teaches the method of proceeding from the set question to the key propositions. At first he summarises status theory, from rhetoric, but he moves on to describe a technique of invention in which many dependent questions are generated from one given question. Agricola introduces his discussion of status theory by re-emphasizing the importance of the question.

Since therefore everyone who discusses anything is concerned with a question, and not just those who consider doubtful matters in disputationes, or those who by passing on the arts try to obtain certain knowledge, or create better belief (which is the situation of those learning) but also those who investigate a question through writing a history or a poem....Since this is the case, we ought to consider carefully, over and over again, what the question is, that is, what is the chief point and culmination of everything to which all the things the speaker says must be referred.<sup>55</sup>

The writer must always keep the title in mind, and must say neither too much nor too little, nor anything at all irrelevant. No one can do this unless they have the question on which they are going to speak fixed and set out in advance (240-241).

Then Agricola summarises what the rhetoricians have to say about status. In those cases in which there is an opponent, as in school exercises or law cases, the status of the case is the point at which one seeks what the other contradicts. He illustrates this by considering the arguments behind Cicero's speeches for Plancius and Milo, setting out the initial contentions and the points of disagreement on which the cases were fought. He adds a brief discussion of two cases in which there were several points at issue, and therefore more than one basic issue which could be the status, *Pro Cquentio* and *In Verrem*. He concludes that the status is the point which, when it is decided, determines the case one way or the other (241-242).

When he considers the unopposed oration he moves away from traditional teaching. Three things must be considered: the characters of the people involved, the subject-matter of the oration and the purpose of the oration (*conatus*) (244).

As in a speech of consolation, we see this man mourning the loss of the thing which he longs for; this is the subject-matter. Next, the people

---

<sup>55</sup> *DID*, p. 240: 'Quando igitur omni disserenti proposita est quaestio, non eis modo qui disputationibus res ambiguas iactant, aut qui tradendis artibus vel certiorem vel (quod dissentibus perinde est) meliorem fidem facere conantur, sed et historia et poëma quoque quaestionem explicant....[he refers to Thucydides, Sallust, Homer and Virgil]...Cum haec ergo ita sint, diligenter est nobis etiam atque etiam intuendum, quae sit quaestio, hoc est quod sit caput summaque rerum omnium, ad quam dicenti sint cuncta referenda.'

involved are friends, he to us and we to him. This is the reason that we are pained by his sorrow. The purpose of the oration follows, to which we give our attention, that this man should not mourn, and that is what we are working to achieve in the oration. Now, if you join the purpose of the oration to the subject-matter, you will have the question, which is, 'ought this man to mourn because of the loss of this thing?'

In a congratulatory speech, first the people involved are necessarily well disposed. The subject-matter will be that something advantageous or dignified has happened to the person we are congratulating. The purpose of the oration is to show that we are happy because our good will leads us to favour the affairs of this man. So the question will be 'ought we to be happy at the man's present advantage?'<sup>56</sup>

What is important in this passage is the determination to decide the main question at issue on the basis of general principles. Where the rhetorical tradition would divide the demonstrative oration into subgenres (consolation, congratulation) and provide a list of likely arguments for each kind, Agricola works by putting together the material of the oration, the aim of the speaker and the nature of the people involved. The speaker's estimate of the individual circumstances of the particular oration determine the key question, not some pre-existing taxonomy which reacts to every situation in the same way.

With the help of some examples of speeches of thanks from Cicero, he concludes that the audience for this kind of speech must be considered very carefully. By comparing the attitudes to the matter in question of the different people involved, the speaker must determine what he should attempt to do.

He takes the example of a speech at a wedding and considers what might be said to various people there. In addressing the couple about to be married the orator will want to encourage them and set out the reasons why they should marry, taking a question like 'should these people marry?'. In addressing the guests the speaker will want to convince them that they should rejoice at the marriage and the question will be 'ought one to rejoice at such a fortunate marriage?'. In funeral speeches, to the family the

---

<sup>56</sup> *DID*, p 244: 'Ut in consolatione videmus hunc desideratae rei iactura dolere, haec quidem res est. Personae deinde sunt, hic nobis, nos huic amici, quo fit ut offendamur eius dolore. Conatus ergo sequitur, quo damus operam ne huic doleat, idque dicendo consequi laboramus. Ergo si conatum atque rem coniungas, quaestionem habebis. Ea est, sit ne huic dolendum huius rei amissae causa.

In gratulatione personas primum necesse est benevolas esse. Res vero erit, ut aliquid eius cui gratulamur commodis aut dignitati accesserit. Conatus autem, quoniam ob benevolentiam favemus rebus illius, ut ostendamus nos laetari. Quaestio ergo erit, an illius praesenti commodo laetemur.'

emphasis will be on consolation, while to strangers the emphasis will be on praise of the dead man and on the untimeliness of his death (244-246).

Agricola wants to treat the unopposed oration as broadly equivalent to demonstrative oratory. His treatment is unusual in that it urges the speaker or writer to think out the composition from the governing principles (the event, the audience, the speaker, the aim) rather than by relying on special topics suited to each sub-genre of speech.

Once the main question has been found it must be broken down into the sub-questions implied within it, so that its complexity can be understood. Apparently simple questions can often be analysed into many related questions according to their force and effect. In a very practical chapter Agricola explains how this is to be done, and then shows what he means by working through the example 'did Cato rightly hand Marcia over to Hortensius?'. The derived questions arise either from the words of the original question or from what is implied in the words. The words lead to questions like 'did Cato hand over Marcia?', 'did he hand her over to Hortensius?', 'did he do so rightly?'. Things included involve general considerations about men and women, and particular things we know about the three people involved (e.g. Cato as a Roman citizen, a Stoic philosopher, a member of the senatorial order). Any of these considerations may lead to useful arguments or may alter one's perception of what the key point at issue is (247-250). After assembling a whole battery of questions, one will be in a better position to determine which are the crucial questions that must in turn be subjected to topical invention. Agricola uses the example of the case of the Theban talents to show that not all derived questions are equally fruitful. He argues that whereas some questions expand into a number of sub-cases, in other examples (he cites the five books of the *Tusculan Disputations*) several different discussions may be put together to argue a single question: whether virtue is enough for living in a good and holy manner.<sup>57</sup>

For Agricola dialectic deals with questions and the skill of formulating telling questions is a crucial part of the process of invention. The effectiveness of the arguments discovered through the topics is entirely dependent on the focus and appeal of the questions chosen for topical investigation. To this end Agricola combines dialectical teachings on the nature of the proposition and the types of question with the rhetorical

---

<sup>57</sup> *DID*, pp. 250-252. The Theban talents *controversia* is also discussed by Quintilian, George of Trebizond and Erasmus, see chapter 11 n. 30 below.

theory of status. He adds a step by step method of his own for determining the implied questions. But the most remarkable part of his discussion of the question is the section in which he moves away from the elaborate technical classification of status theory in the rhetorical tradition to a more general treatment of status in which the principles of thinking about general issues, particular circumstances, audience, and, where appropriate, the likely arguments of an adversary, are brought to the fore. Agricola realised that thinking about these principles is more important and more effective than trying to learn all the sub-types in order to carry out the process mechanically.

Agricola's treatment of the question is highly original in the way it brings together diverse material, but at times he overlooks necessary distinctions. He becomes more tied up than usual in criticizing previous writers (sometimes rather pedantically),<sup>58</sup> and in teaching or discussing materials which are not strictly to the point. This results in an overcomplicated structure in some chapters.

---

<sup>58</sup> Agricola's criticism of Boethius's definition of question is not really fair (as both Alardus and Phrissemius note), and his own elaboration of important material (a definition and a threefold division) in two stages does not help. See note 44 above. *DID*, p. 224, Phrissemius (1528), p. 189.

## CHAPTER NINE

### EXPOSITION AND ARGUMENTATION

The opposition between the categories of exposition and argumentation is one of the consistent points of reference of *De inventione dialectica*. In the first chapter of the book they are seen to reflect a difference between two types of audience.

We create belief either in someone ready to believe, as if we are leading him along voluntarily or we overcome someone who is unwilling to believe and drag him along as he resists. The first happens through exposition, the second is brought about by argumentation. I call exposition a statement which only explains the opinion of a speaker, without doing anything to convince the hearer. Argumentation I call discourse in which someone tries to create belief in what he is speaking about.<sup>1</sup>

The distinction reappears in the second part of book two, devoted to discourse (*oratio*), the instrument of dialectic. There Agricola distinguishes between two different kinds of language. One kind (exposition) considers it sufficient to set out the thing it is dealing with, confident that the hearers will agree with it, once they understand what is being said. The other kind (argumentation) tries to overcome an audience which resists (258). Both kinds of language operate at a level higher than that of the sentence and both reflect the speaker's perception of the mood of the audience. Although Agricola's initial definition portrays them as opposites, with further analysis he shows that they share common features.

No one before Agricola distinguishes between exposition and argumentation in this way. His source is the distinction which rhetoric makes between narration and confirmation, the second and third sections of the standard four-part oration. The term *expositio* is probably taken from the observation in *Rhetorica ad Herennium* that 'a narration is the exposition of the events that occurred or might have occurred' (1.3.4), in

---

<sup>1</sup> *DID*, pp. 1-2: 'Fidem facimus vel credenti, et velut sponte sequentem ducimus, vel pervincimus non credentem atque repugnantem trahimus. Alterum expositione fit, alterum argumentatione conficitur. Expositionem voco orationem, quae solam dicentis mentem explicat, nullo quo fides audienti fiat adhibito. Argumentationem vero, orationem quo quis rei de qua dicit fidem facere conatur.'

which exposition appears to be the genus to which narration belongs.

At the beginning of his full treatment of exposition and argumentation, in book two, Agricola states that exposition is the same as narration, argumentation as confirmation, except that his terms refer to the kind of discourse, whereas the traditional terms refer to the sections of the oration. He points out that in an oration one sometimes finds short passages of argumentation within the narration (258). *Exordium* and conclusion combine argumentation and exposition. Thus in the *exordium* we make the audience eager to listen by summarising what we are going to say (exposition), but we make them attentive and well disposed through argumentation.<sup>2</sup> Within the section on argumentation and exposition Agricola sets out many of the elements from a rhetorical treatise on invention.

The difference between exposition and argumentation is a matter of linguistic texture. Agricola illustrates the distinction by discussing two passages from the beginning of the *Aeneid*.

Exposition, as we say, recounts only that a certain thing is such, as if to a hearer disposed to believe. Argumentation tries to prove that a certain thing is such, using reason. So that this is exposition:

‘Urbs antiqua fuit, Tyrii tenuere coloni,  
Carthago’ and what follows.

The poet reviews the reasons why Juno hated Aeneas. If he had considered them in such a way that he made it doubtful whether Juno hated Aeneas and wanted to prove it by rehearsing these reasons, it would have been argumentation. Now because the hatred of Juno is taken as certain and beyond doubt, the causes are subjoined to it, not to show that Juno hated Aeneas, for that is regarded as certain as we have said, but to show the reasons why the hatred itself arose, it is exposition.

But now if we should change the sentence and say: ‘there is no doubt that Juno hated Aeneas, because she loved Carthage, whose ruin would be brought about by the descendants of Aeneas and because she stood against the Trojans on the side of her Argives in the war’ and the other things the poet has put in, it would become argumentation.

Incidentally, we should point out that on occasion the same thing can be exposition and argumentation, provided that the linguistic form is altered, just as the same thing can be the cause of a thing and its reason. The reason is that by which something is known, the cause is that by which it is.

[He illustrates the point that reason and cause can be the same with a discussion about the apparent shape of the moon].

What the poet introduces a little later is, however, argumentation:

‘me ne incepto desistere victim  
nec posse Italia Teucrorum avertere regem?’

---

<sup>2</sup> *DID*, pp. 308-312, (310).

and the rest (the passages are well known).

Juno is not saying to herself, as if to someone disposed to believe, that she does not want to give up her plans; but, with the addition of a reason she explains to herself why it would be unworthy for her to give up; and she encourages herself to persist in the same frame of mind.<sup>3</sup>

Here the distinction depends on the presence or absence of connections between the sentences, on the density of the material and on the vehemence of the expression. Agricola shows that the same material and the same topical relationships can be employed in either mode.

In this passage he aims to show that exposition and argumentation are closely related and that the material for them can be generated in the same way. But the comparison he makes also offers a way of reading the opening of the poem in which the facts explained by the poet are reinterpreted by Juno's emotional exhortation of herself to anger. This anger then provides the impetus for the first dialogue of the poem, her interview with Aeolus. The analysis also reveals a difference of texture, in the way similar material is arranged to produce different effects. Argumentation provides the strength and cohesion of an oration. The skill of making an exposition, in so far as it belongs to the dialectician, springs from the method of finding arguments.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> *DID*, pp. 258-259: 'Expositio ergo (quemadmodum dicimus) est, quae rem recenset solum talem aliquam esse velut credenti auditori. Argumentatio, quae talem esse rem ratione pervincere nititur. Ut sit expositio: Urbs antiqua fuit, Tyrii tenuere coloni, Carthago, quaeque sequuntur. Causas enim propter quas oderat Aeneam Iuno recenset poëta. Easque si sic accepisset, ut dubium faceret an odisset Aeneam Iuno, harumque commemoratione causarum vellet id docere, argumentatio esset. Nunc quia odium Iunonis velut certum indubitatumque sumitur, cui causae subduntur, non ut ostendatur odisse Aeneam Iuno, quippe pro certo est, quemadmodum diximus, sed propter quas odium ipsum provenierit, expositio est. Quod si iam convertamus orationem dicamusque, non dubium est quin oderit Aeneam Iuno, quoniam Carthaginem amabat, cui exitium ab Aeneae posteritate venturum erat, et quia contra Trojanos steterat pro Argivis suis in bello, et reliqua quae poëta subdidit, argumentatio fiet. Ut obiter admoneamus, idem quandoque expositiōnem et argumentatiōnem, mutata tantum orationis forma fieri posse, cum possit idipsum et causa rei esse et ratio. Rationem in praesentia dico, per quam res cognoscitur; causam, per quam est... .

Argumentatio autem est, quod paulo post subiecit poëta: Mene incepto desistere victam Nec posse Italia Teucrorum avertere regem? Et reliqua, noti enim sunt loci. Non dicit Iuno sibi ipsi tanquam credenti nolle se desistere proposito, sed addita ratione docet ipsa se, quare indignum sit ut desistat; hortaturque, ut in sententia permaneat.' *Aeneid* 1, 12ff., 37ff.

<sup>4</sup> *DID*, p. 261: 'Sed nos singulatim de utraque, primumque de argumentatione dicamus, quoniam sunt in ea robur nervique disserentis. Expositio enim invenit (ut ita dicam) fidem, argumentatio facit eam. Si quid autem habet expositio, sicut habet utique artis, quod dialectico praecipiendum sit, id fere ex argumentandi ratione descendit.'

### *Exposition and Persuasion*

Before discussing argumentation, Agricola wants to make some general points about creating belief. Belief can be created either by argumentation or by arranging the elements of the situation (the character of the speaker, the audience's emotions and predispositions, the facts of the case) in such a way that the audience can organise the facts presented into arguments and proofs on their own (261).

He illustrates this idea with a detailed discussion of the passage from *Aeneid* 2 (57-198), in which Sinon pretends to have been left behind because he has escaped from the Greek camp, and persuades the Trojans to take the wooden horse within the gates. This passage had interested previous commentators.<sup>5</sup> The ancient commentators, taking their cue from Aeneas, treated it as a textbook example of how to lie successfully by mixing true and false. The Renaissance rhetorician George of Trebizond cites it in *Rheticorum libri V*, concluding that

one should beware carefully throughout the whole speech and most of all in a made-up story that the things which are said do not disagree too much nor conflict with one another and that we do not seem to say or think anything in the entire speech differently from the way we have expressed it.<sup>6</sup>

George uses the success of the speech to remind his audience of the rhetorical requirement that a narration should fit together. Agricola's analysis is more unified and far more detailed than previous discussions.

In Virgil the words of the character Sinon have nothing in them which creates belief in the story he invents about what has happened to him, and about the horse. Where then does belief in him come from?<sup>7</sup>

He begins to answer his question by considering the circumstances. Because they think the Greeks have gone, the Trojans feel more secure and

<sup>5</sup> See my 'Rudolph Agricola's Reading of Literature', *JWCI*, 48 (1985), pp. 23-41 (31-33).

<sup>6</sup> George of Trebizond, *Rheticorum libri V* (Venice, 1523), fol. a6<sup>r</sup>: 'Praeterea id maxime memoriae tenendum arbitror quod cum ubique per totam orationem diligenter faciendum sit, tum vel maxime in ficta narratione valde cavendum, ne parum inter se, quae dicuntur convenient, ne sibi ipsis pugnantia sint, ne quid per totam orationem aliter ac exposuimus, aut dicere aut sentire videamur.'

<sup>7</sup> *DID*, p. 262: 'Sinon ille Vergilianus nihil habet in verbis suis, quo fidem faciat eis, quae de casu suo deque fabricatione equi configit. Unde ergo fides illi venit?' It is worth pointing out (as I failed to do in the article cit in n. 5 above) that Agricola introduces this analysis with a proverb about successful lying, 'in proverbium est, neminem satis credibiliter alii mentitur, nisi qui fuerit antea sibi mentitus.'

less suspicious. That Sinon has been left behind suggests that he was an enemy to the Greeks and provokes pity for him. The Trojans want to believe in the truth of the treacherous acts he attributes to Ulysses and they do not see what Sinon has to gain from lying. Moreover several other facts seem to fit in with this explanation. The seizure of the Palladium would appear to demand some sort of divine retribution. Since the horse is an animal sacred to the gods, the construction of a wooden horse appears to be an appropriate act of expiation. The fact that the sea monsters seized Laocoön when he violated the horse seems to confirm that it is in some way sacred.

Because everything that is said agrees with those events although there is nothing in the speech to prove the truth of what is being said, the listener himself, through collecting and comparing these things, as well as their order and agreement among themselves, persuades himself that it is so.<sup>8</sup>

Agricola then examines the relations between the true and untrue elements in the speech. Two certain truths form the foundation of each half of the deception - Ulysses schemed against Palamedes; the Greeks had put all their trust in Pallas. Sinon develops his story from these truths with statements that are probable in themselves (that the Greeks had often wanted to leave; the details of his escape; the relief of the other soldiers when he was chosen to die), with propositions that are similar to true ones (that a human sacrifice was required for safe departure, in parallel with the sacrifice of Iphigenia to arrive; that Ulysses devised a stratagem, as he had before) and with statements that they have no reason not to believe. He points out that one important untruth (that Sinon was related to Palamedes) was accepted because it connects two truths (Palamedes's death and Sinon's being left behind) in such a way as to explain the second of them (262-263). This untruth then forms the basis of the cover story which enables Sinon to be regarded as truthful and benevolent. It also explains his motive for urging that they take the horse into Troy.

Although these things are in the speech itself, one is not joined to another in such a way as to create belief; but the single propositions argued independently create belief through the deliberation of the listener reflecting on them in his own mind.

Most of it seems to be believable on its own account, purely on an

---

<sup>8</sup> *DID*, p. 262: 'Quia narrantur omnia consentanea istis, quanquam nihil sit in oratione, quo vera quae dicuntur probentur, ipse tamen auditor collectione collationeque rerum, et earum inter se ordine et congruentia, sic esse sibi persuadet.' Compare Agricola's introduction to the discussion 'Rebus contigit fides, quam is qui audit, velut tacita apud animum suum argumentatione colligit' etc. *DID*, p. 261.

assessment of things, because everything is said in a way which is suitable and fitting to its own nature. This kind of belief, although it is at times needed in every kind of discourse, is most of all necessary in the exposition, since it can only obtain belief from the matter at issue.<sup>9</sup>

Agricola's detailed analysis depends on the technique of dialectical reading which he sets out in book two. The reader must reassemble the implicit chains of reasoning in a passage, by relating sentences (as propositions) through the subsidiary questions to the main question being discussed.<sup>10</sup> Agricola's analysis follows Sinon's speech in detail, reconstructing the relationships between propositions, which Sinon has left unconnected, but which his hearers will connect into an argumentation that will deceive them. In effect the analysis turns the speech from exposition into argumentation. Its purpose is to show that the speech is effective because instead of the speaker presenting a fully argued case, it is left to the hearers to convince themselves by organising the assertions into proofs and consequences.

### *Exposition*

Agricola's systematic treatment of exposition (chapters 21 and 22) begins by distinguishing three uses of exposition: pleasing the audience, which he assigns to poetry; explaining the nature of something, which is assigned to history and to accounts of exemplary lives and deeds; and creating belief in what is spoken of, which belongs to orators, philosophers and textbook writers (297). He is concerned with the third class.

In those expositions which aim to secure belief in something, it is not enough that what is set out should be true. It also needs to be firm and almost self-sustaining in credibility. Also it needs to be so suited to the thing which is intended to be proved that the main points of all the things that we will be creating belief in and confirming can be drawn from there.<sup>11</sup>

Our opponents will always be looking to deny whatever can be denied, and

<sup>9</sup> *DID*, p. 263: 'Quanquam sint autem haec omnia in ipsa oratione, non tamen altera adhibetur alteri tanquam fidem factura, sed singulae per se positae, reputatione audientis et apud animum suum comparantis eas, parant fidem. Pleraque vero se ipsis sola rerum aestimatione, quia apte accommodateque omnia naturae suae dicuntur, idcirco videntur credibilia. Hocque fidei genus quum omni orationi nonnunquam, tum est expositioni maxime necessarium, cum non habeat ea fidem nisi ex rebus.'

<sup>10</sup> *DID*, pp. 358-362. See chapter 11 below.

<sup>11</sup> *DID*, p. 298: 'At in expositionibus eis, quibus fides alicui rei quaeritur, non satis est esse vera quae exponentur, sed et firma et velut fidem sibi ipsis facientia oportet esse, tum ad id cui probando destinantur ita accommodata, ut capita fidei facienda confirmandarumque rerum nostrarum omnia possint inde deponi.'

to turn to their own purposes whatever cannot. Every exposition which has an argumentative function needs to be both convincing (*probabilis*) and appropriate (*accomodata*), that is, capable of being joined aptly with what we wish to prove with it. In order to be convincing an exposition must be argumentative, consistent with the facts and consequential (*argumentosa*, *consentanea rebus, per se consequens*). The exposition will be argumentative if it includes the causes of things. It will be consistent if it agrees with the characters, places, times and events involved. It will be consequential if the preparatory facts are set out in such a way that the conclusions follow and that the audience is made ready to accept them. Agricola cites examples of each of these three qualities drawn from sources he has already discussed at length, Sinon's speech and *Pro Milone* (298-299).

Agricola says that it is much harder to make an exposition suited to what will be proved. He can only suggest a few approaches. First one should collect together in their most simple form all the arguments available and sort them into the favourable, which must be emphasized, the neutral, which must be made to help one's cause as much as possible, and the adverse, which must be neutralized. Secondly he recommends that one should always begin the exposition with something favourable (302). He supports this contention by analysing two of Simo's speeches from the opening scene of Terence's *Andria*. By commenting on the passage line by line, he argues that the favourable impression of the woman from Andros given at the beginning persists even when later remarks suggest a moral decline (302-303).

It is like the case of those painters who begin to shade around a colour which was at first pure and surrounded by no shadows, so lightly at first that they almost deceive the sense of sight, then the darkness gradually grows, so that in the end the black overshadows all the colour and there is nothing but black. And yet in spite of all this we seem to be able to find that first type of colour, which we saw when it was pure, because it was over-shadowed little by little but was never wiped off completely, even in that shade where none of it now is.

The same thing happens with an argument which we at first accepted, because we do not see it contradicted in what follows, even though it gradually disappears and finally for all practical purposes vanishes altogether. Nevertheless someone who hears it, because he does not see it directly contradicted, keeps it in his mind and adheres to it, as though it is still there.

Hence although the poet began with a respectable woman and went on to speak of a prostitute, that is, went from the most honourable kind of character to the most disgraceful, still the commendation and favour which he obtained for the respectable woman, because he has retained it as far as

possible through all that followed, persists even when he reaches the disgraced woman.<sup>12</sup>

Agricola's comment displays both a close response to the successive sentences (at times even phrases) of this exposition, and a view of its overall effect. Previous writers, including Cicero,<sup>13</sup> had praised the exposition of *Andria* but this passage had not previously been subjected to such detailed commentary. The thematic lesson is the simple one of always trying to begin with something favourable, even if that means moving back some distance from the matter in hand.

The use of the analogy from painting also deserves comment. To make the comparison, Agricola first reimagines a chiaroscuro painting as a temporal object, outlining the sequence in which it might have been painted. The viewer is envisaged as reconstructing this sequence, imagining the painter laying down a bright colour before applying the darker shades which now overwhelm it. The viewer clings on to this first colour, allowing it to guide his understanding of the portion of the canvas which is now almost entirely dark. Agricola seems to be reconstructing the experience of staring into the darkest portions of a painting, searching for shapes or lines which will clarify the ambiguous shapes which one can just make out in the adjoining portion.<sup>14</sup>

Presumably he chooses the example of painting because the pure colour and the surrounding darkness are simultaneously present as one views the picture, even though they imply a temporal sequence. In this example he is

<sup>12</sup> *DID*, pp. 303-304: 'Quemadmodum ergo pictores, qui colorem purum et nulla circumfusum umbra, leniter primum ut prope sensum fallant incipiunt adumbrare, deinde paulatim subcrescente obscuritate, cum iam postremo atrum umbrae totum oppressit colorem nihilque praeter nigrum sit, videmur tamen nobis primam illam coloris speciem, quam puram accepimus, quia paulatim deficit, nec abrumpitur usquam, etiam in ipsa umbra ubi nullus iam est, inventuri. Sic et persuasionem primum acceptam, quia non videmus in sequentibus eripi nobis, licet defluat etiam paulatim, et tandem quantum ad rem pertinet deficit. Qui audit tamen, quia nusquam ubi auferretur vidit, velut adhuc subsit, ita sequitur animo et adhaeret. Quanquam ergo poeta a pudica orsus ad meretricem, hoc est, ab honestissima persona orationem ad foedissimam deduxerit, commendationem tamen et favorem, quem in pudica sumpsit, quia per media cuncta quatenus potest, retentat, etiam cum ad impudicam pervenit adhuc tuerit.' In the second paragraph of my translation I have retained the two 'because' clauses, though I imagine that Agricola would have removed one of them in revising the work.

<sup>13</sup> *De oratore*, 2.80.326-7.

<sup>14</sup> Although what Agricola says makes sense as a way of looking at a painting, in my experience at least it applies more to sixteenth or seventeenth century paintings than to those of the fifteenth century. Alberti discusses the use of shadow in *De pictura*, but not in terms which could be a source for Agricola here. L. B. Alberti, *De pictura*, ed. C. Grayson (Bari 1980, reprinted from the edition in *Opere volgari*, III, Bari 1973), pp. 22-23, 81-87.

working at the very edge of the relationship between the two media, bringing his practical experience as a painter to illuminate his viewing of pictures<sup>15</sup> or perhaps carrying the analogy to the limits of its workability. In order to talk about language Agricola employs an idea about painting, but in order to make the comparison work, the picture has to be reimagined so that it possesses the characteristics of a temporal sequence.

Agricola's third method for making expositions suited to the arguments which will follow reinforces the message of his example from Terence. Favourable material may have to be sought in facts antecedent to the case in point. Everything in the case and in the preceding history of the characters involved needs to be examined with a view to finding suitable material. He cites the example of *Pro Cluentio*, where Cicero begins with the character of the mother (304-305).

The fourth suggestion is that one should begin by reviewing all the material, and not merely that which is at first glance relevant, to decide what might be harmful to one's case. One should imagine what one's opponent could make of, or would fear from particular points. This will help one decide how to handle these matters (305-306).

He concludes by recalling that persuasive exposition is helpful in the arts and in philosophical disputation as well as in oratory. Exposition can be used to draw out the consequences of a particular conclusion. Conversely the debater who has not made a mental exposition will often end up arguing in a vacuous and purposeless way. Agricola says that Duns Scotus, when faced with a particularly awkward problem, would often propose a picture as a kind of exposition in order to imagine the thing at issue. The picture helped him keep hold of the general issue while debating the detailed questions (306).

When one compares Agricola's discussion of exposition with earlier treatments of narration,<sup>16</sup> it is clear that he has neglected the more stylistic criteria of clarity and brevity, while re-examining the third criterion of plausibility. Some of the points collected by Agricola are found in Quintilian's treatment of the plausible,<sup>17</sup> but Agricola's threefold organisation, into argumentativeness, consistency with the facts, and consequence, is clearer and more instructive. His neglect of clarity and

<sup>15</sup> M. Baxandall, 'Rudolph Agricola and the Visual Arts', *Intuition und Kunstsweisenschaft. Festschrift für Hanns Swarzenski* (Berlin 1973), pp. 409-418 (409, 413).

<sup>16</sup> *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, 1.8.12-10.16, *De inventione*, 1.19.27-21.30, *Partitiones oratoriae*, 9.31-32, *Institutio oratoria*, 4.2.

<sup>17</sup> *Institutio oratoria*, 4.2.33-34, 52-60.

brevity, which may result from his chosen examples, or from his views on the role of grammar, can also be seen as following Quintilian's comment that narrations sometimes have to be lengthy and can involve emotional appeals, and the use of stylistic embellishments.<sup>18</sup> Like Agricola, Quintilian expects that some argumentation may be required within a narrative. Agricola's discussion of how to make an exposition fit what will be argued for opens an area of instruction not considered in the rhetorics, but it does not succeed in producing a systematic procedure. Although the discussion of examples is rich and very detailed, the way from understanding them to improving one's own practice is not completely clear.

### *Argumentation*

When the main treatment of argumentation and exposition is introduced (chapters 16 and 17), argumentation is distinguished from exposition in two ways. Argumentation involves winning or compelling acceptance from your audience or adversary.

Whoever is taught is either prepared to believe, or is compelled to do so by the force of the speech (*oratio*). In the same way also, the speech either fulfils its function in explaining the thing it speaks about, secure in the trust and opinion of the hearer, or it must try to win over a hearer who resists. The former would be exposition, the latter argumentation...

Argumentation is language through which people try to create conviction about the subject-matter of their speech...

Argumentation uses reason to try to persuade someone that something is the case.<sup>19</sup>

We can call argumentation the type of discourse in which we embrace at the same time the thing we wish to prove and the thing we have found as the means to try to prove it.<sup>20</sup>

Argumentation is a form of language which we employ in order to extract acceptance of a conclusion from an unwilling audience or opponent. It works by connecting something we wish to prove with something which will prove it. These connections are found, according to book one chapter two, through the topics.

---

<sup>18</sup> *Institutio oratoria*, 4.2.43-51, 111-124.

<sup>19</sup> *DID*, p. 258: 'Qui docetur autem aut paratus est credere aut est orationis vi cogendus. Sic et oratio aut satis habet explicare rem de qua dicit, cuiusmodi sit, secura fidei opinionisque eius qui audit, aut talem esse pervincere etiam renitente auditore conatur. Illud expositione fit, istud argumentatione... Argumentationem vero orationem, qua quis rei de qua dicit, fidem facere conatur... Argumentatio, quae talem esse rem, ratione pervincere nititur.'

<sup>20</sup> *DID*, pp. 263-264: 'Id vero, quo simul complectimur rem quam probare volumus et illud inventum quo probare conamur, eam argumentationem esse dicimus.'

Agricola's main treatment of argumentation falls into four sections. In the first he sets out the traditional four types of argumentation: induction, syllogism, example and enthymeme. He discusses a few differences of terminology (enumeration for induction, ratiocination for syllogism); he describes and gives examples of different types for some of the forms and he labels the parts and the terms of the syllogism. He shows that not all examples are incomplete inductions, and that not all incomplete inductions are examples. He points out the connection between example (a form of argumentation) and the topic of comparisons (265-268). The second chapter on argumentation is concerned with the ways the forms of argumentation are used in orations. He distinguishes between perfect and imperfect conclusions, and explains (against Aristotle's claim that orators use them) that all authors on occasion use imperfect forms. He also cites examples of full syllogisms from *Pro Milone* and *Pro Plancio*, and analyses some of the arguments in *Pro lege Manilia*. He claims that rhetorical commonplaces are equivalent to major premisses (279-282).<sup>21</sup> In his third chapter, on how to confirm argumentations, he discusses the use of perfect and imperfect forms, direct and indirect means of proof, the way in which imperfect forms may be shored up, and how to construct chains of proof in which subordinate arguments establish the premisses of more important arguments. The choice of method of proof is considered in relation to different attitudes of the opponent (283-287). The fourth chapter is concerned with demolishing one's opponents' arguments. Either one attacks the argument, claiming either that the premisses are untrue or that the construction is faulty, or one attacks the arguer, by making more serious charges against him, by denying the need to reply to him, by treating his arguments as a joke, or by digressing. Agricola provides examples for each of these approaches from *Pro Caelio*, *Pro Ligario*, Seneca and the *Aeneid* (290-293). He twice cites a passage of Juno's speech from the quarrel in heaven of *Aeneid* 10:

Indignum est Italos Troiam circumdare flammis  
 Nascentem, et patria Turnum consistere terra,  
 Cui Pilumnus avus, cui diva Venilia mater:  
 Quid, face Troianos atra vim ferre Latinis,  
 Arva aliena iugo premere atque avertere praedas? (74-78)

Agricola first uses Juno's reply as an instance of answering one argument

---

<sup>21</sup> *Rhetoric*, 1356a36-b26.

whose force one acknowledges (that it is shameful for the Italians to surround the newly-founded Trojan colony with flames) with another (the greater shame of the Trojans attacking the Latins in their own country - 77). When, a few lines later, Agricola discusses the use of laughter to answer arguments, he shows how Juno dismisses Venus's claim that fate had directed the Trojans to Italy by attributing it to Cassandra's ravings ('Cassandrae impulsus furiis' - 68). Then he returns to the passage quoted above, claiming that lines 75-6 undermine Venus's argument with a joke. 'She made light of it with a comparison from something more shameful, and showed that this first action ought not to appear so shameful.'<sup>22</sup> In another case he shows how a chain of Stoic arguments about the wise man and wealth, which he had built up in the previous chapter, can be attacked on the grounds of equivocation (290-291).

Agricola consciously avoids recapitulating the subject-matter of dialectical judgement. He does not attempt to describe all the approved forms of argumentation. Instead he is concerned with their use, providing the information which would help one decide what type of form to use according to the material one has invented, and the circumstances of the argument. He gives examples, he discusses different types, he considers the weaknesses and strengths of the different forms of argumentation. There are no tables of valid forms, but there are many literary examples. It is not exactly like any rhetorical treatment of argumentation; instead it takes the main elements of a traditional treatment of argumentation and reconsiders them from the point of view of the use of argument in real language.

This leaves unresolved the question of whether Agricola intended to write another treatise on judgement. The judgement treatise would not fit the approach of this book. On the other hand, intellectual space has been left for it, and as with the (equally absent) treatise on style, it is assumed that eventually the student will have to acquire knowledge of the subject, even if from another author.

The basic assumption of the chapters on exposition and argumentation is that persuasion is conducted through real language, speech, *oratio*. Although he adapts (and adds to) material from the rhetoric and dialectic manuals, much of the weight of these chapters is carried by his instructive citations and analyses of passages from classical literature. The distinction between exposition and argumentation is a matter of expression in relation

---

<sup>22</sup> *DID*, pp. 292-3: 'Indignioris comparatione elevavit, ostenditque non oportere id ita indignum videri.'

to context. Together with some of the practical chapters from book three it opens up the possibility of a new analysis of style, based on the texture of language, and on the situation confronted by the speaker.

## CHAPTER TEN

### BOOK THREE: MOVING, PLEASING AND DISPOSITION

Where book two had been concerned mainly with dialectic, taking its structure from the triad subject-matter, instrument, treatment, book three expands into rhetoric, passing from teaching to moving and pleasing, and from invention to disposition. Agricola treats moving, pleasing and disposition more briefly than the topics and arguing. The surprising thing is that he discusses them at all in a dialectic book. Agricola considers that the three aspects of book three belong with his core material: teaching and topical invention. Moving and pleasing contribute to teaching and material for both can be found using the topics. Invention feeds disposition, and effective teaching depends on suitable organisation of material.

#### *Moving*

In book two Agricola shows that moving and teaching are related. Where teaching is defined as making something which was unknown better known, moving is 'disturbing the peaceful and tranquil mind with emotions'.<sup>1</sup> Both are brought about by words and things. As far as invention is concerned the method of arousing emotions is little different from that of teaching.

Once he has made these opening remarks, Agricola introduces an objection, a remark which he attributes to Aristotle: 'When one wishes to move the hearer, argumentation is redundant.' Agricola tackles this objection by making a distinction of sense. If Aristotle means that simple undisguised syllogisms will not help much in arousing emotions, he agrees.

But if we call argumentation everything by which we consider what is doubtful and uncertain, I would have thought not only that it is necessary for arousing emotions, but that it ought to be very dense and even thickly packed. For strength is necessary for the intellect to be seized and for the mind itself to be carried away from itself and as it were placed outside itself. This technique of argument is so much imitated by creative writers that if they are short of different arguments, they pile on the same point,

---

<sup>1</sup> *DID*, p 198: '...rem ex ignota facere notiorem...pacatam tranquillamque mentem, affectibus perturbare.'

changing the words, as if they were making several points. What else does Virgil express when Dido says in his work:

Per ego has Lachrymas, dextramque tuam te,...

Per connubia nostra, per inceptos Hymenaeos.

The *dextra* and the *connubium* and the *Hymenaei* were the same thing: he means by these three things nothing other than the faith of married people; however by repeating it in other words he has driven it home as if it were more than one thing.<sup>2</sup>

The analysis aims to show that even when emotion is being worked up, the material is provided by a logical argument. Beyond this, he observes that the idea is made more emotionally emphatic by being repeated in different expressions. The analysis illustrates what Agricola has in mind when he says that the means for emotional manipulation can be found using the techniques for inventing arguments. It also shows how Virgil has achieved an emotional effect through logical consequence and repetition.

One can study the connection between argumentation and emotion in the dramatic poets, especially the tragedians, and in history and oratory. Emotional manipulation was also Cicero's greatest skill. The example of one emotion, pity, is made to stand for the others.

Two things are necessary in order to induce pity: something which has happened to someone, which should seem harsh; and the person who undergoes it, who should seem not to deserve it. What then? Does not Cicero pursue with many arguments in all his appeals for pity either both of these or, if one of them seems evident, then the other? On behalf of Milo, he first draws out Clodius's envy from his whole life and all his deeds. But let us leave this aside and look for what we have been talking about.

What more could he have done to show that Milo did not deserve exile than to argue that he was a very brave man and did not alter his spirit, expression, or words through fear of present danger? Therefore he next introduced a fully formed argumentation derived from the topic of lessers.

For if we are more likely to pity gladiators the less they beg for life,  
how much more will a very brave man who despises danger move us?

Here the mood first shows itself, and the speech is, up to this point, more

---

<sup>2</sup> *DID*, p. 199: 'Quod si omne id vocemus argumentationem, quo dubia incertaque colligimus, non modo opus ea esse ad affectus evocandos crediderim, sed crebriorem etiam densiorem esse oportere. Viribus enim opus est et rapienda mens auferendusque ipse sibi animus et velut extra se ponendus. Imitantur hoc in eloquendo autores, ut si minus [MSS and early editions read *quominus*] sint ipsis plura quae dicant, idem tamen mutatis subinde verbis velut plura ingerant. Quid aliud Virgilius expressit cum dicit apud eum Dido: Per ego has lachrymas, dextramque tuam te, Per connubia nostra, per inceptos Hymenaeos. Idem erant dextra et connubium et Hymenaei. Non enim aliud quam fidem coniugii his tribus significat, repetendo tamen aliis verbis tanquam plura inculcavit.' *Aeneid* 4, 314-316. The remark Agricola attributes to Aristotle is analogous to the comment at *Rhetoric*, 1418a12-14 that you should not use an enthymeme when you wish to arouse emotions. I owe this reference to Larry Green.

tranquil in correspondence with the mind of the speaker. Then, when Milo speaks, it bursts out more freely:

‘Farewell’, he says, ‘farewell my fellow citizens’.

Does not Milo, with the attitude towards the Roman people displayed in these words, seem to be most unworthy of such a fate? Now the rest, as they say, under full sail.

‘In vain’, he says, ‘are the labours I have undertaken! O deceitful hopes’.

His words set out the services of Milo to all classes of society. Then Cicero describes the favour to himself personally of allowing him to return, given as if at the wish of the people. After this comes the distinguished opinion of Milo held by all classes. Then the attitude of this man who assesses everything in terms of virtue that just deeds should be their own reward. Then the fullness of his glory.

‘Concerning me’, he says, ‘the Roman people and all peoples shall always speak.’

What else does all this do but show that Milo does not deserve the fate his accusers intend for him? So much so that if anyone wanted to put these things into syllogisms and to collect them as disputants do, nothing could be done more quickly or more easily.

For what remained, in order to show the gravity of Milo’s situation, the orator, the most skilled of practitioners in influencing minds, transfers the disaster onto himself, and for the person of Milo substitutes his own, that is of Milo’s friend, than which nothing could more favour his cause; so that his tears and laments seem to flow not indeed on behalf of Milo, but most truly from lamenting and bewailing his own fate. What indeed could affect Cicero more gravely than for him to be deprived of that friend for whose safety he was prepared to expend his own, whom he loved so much that he would prefer to die rather than see such an evil befall him?<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> *DID*, pp. 199-200: ‘Duo sint oportet in misericordia movenda: acerbus alicuius casus, et eum qui perferat indignum illo videri. Quid ergo? Non omnibus commiserationibus Cicero, vel utraque haec, vel si alterum apertum putat, alterum multis argumentis prosecutur? Pro Milone, Clodii primum invidiam e tota vita illius omnibus factis eruit. Sed omittamus hanc atque quaeramus id quod sumpsimus. Quo magis potuit ostendere indignum exilio Milonem, quam quod fortissimus vir erat atque praesentis periculi metu non animum, non vultum, non orationem mutabat? Ergo subiicit iam formatam et expressam argumentationem a minori deductam. Si enim gladiatorium miseret eo magis, quo minus sunt supplices, quanto rectius fortissimus vir contumax periculorum nos movebit? Profert enim se primum affectus, utque animus dicentis, ita etiam pacatior adhuc est oratio. Deinde datis Miloni verbis liberius erumpit: ‘Valeant (inquit) valeant cives mei’ (93). An non Milo hoc erga Populum Romanum animo, quem ista verba praefrerunt, indignissimus tali casu videbitur? Iam reliqua plenis (quod aiunt) velis: ‘O frustra (inquit) suspecti mei labores, o spes fallaces’ (94). Merita habent Milonis erga omnes ordines. Deinde privatim beneficium Ciceroni in reditu illius velut populi voluntate datum. Post haec egregia est omnium ordinum de Milone opinio. Iam animus illius omnia ex virtute aestimantis, quod recte factorum praemium sint ipsa recte facta. Iam gloriae amplitudo: ‘De me (inquit) semper Populus Romanus, semper omnes gentes loquentur’ (98). Quid his omnibus agitur, nisi ut ostendatur indignissimum esse Milonem eo casu, quem intentent adversari? Adeo ut si quis coniicere in syllogismos ista

Once he has explained the effect of Cicero's return to speaking in his own voice, Agricola reports Cicero's laments. Rather than lose Milo, Cicero would prefer Clodius to be alive, even to be consul or dictator.

The orator repeatedly turns his thoughts from the emotion aroused to the case. He does not do this merely to arouse pity, but rather through pity to extort what he wants from the minds of the judges. This is the reason for those appeals:

What you judges, what mind will you be in then? You, you I appeal to, the strongest men.

And those which follow a little later

but in what cause could it not be done? by whom could it not? at whose plea?

But these things do not belong to what we are teaching, nor are we explaining the method of invention in this place; what we wanted to show was that those things which aroused the emotions were all derived from the same topics which we use when we want material for teaching.

For amplification is, as Cicero says, a certain vehement argumentation. This means that amplification may be used for teaching, and argumentation for moving emotions.<sup>4</sup>

In this discussion Agricola at first sets out the theory of arousing pity, that one must present the occurrence as terrible, and the person to whom it occurs as virtuous and undeserving of such a fate. This theory essentially follows Aristotle, though *De oratore* adopts the same idea.<sup>5</sup> Then Agricola analyses details from *Pro Milone* to show how Cicero establishes these two propositions in turn, commenting on how argumentation helps him do this. Finally he shows how, even while working with emotions, Cicero kept his mind on the outcome he wanted from the judges.

---

velit et disputantium more colligere, nihil expeditius aut facilius fieri possit. Pro eo quod reliquum erat, ut ostenderet gravissimum esse hunc Milonis casum, orator tractandorum animorum artifex peritissimus transfert in se hanc calamitatem, proque Milonis persona suam, hoc est amici, qua nihil favorabilius esse potest, substitut, ut lachrymae eius querelaeque, non iam Milonis vicem, sed suam dolentis deflentisque fortunam, iustissime fluere videantur. Quid ergo potuit gravius contingere Ciceroni, quam eo se privari amico, pro cuius salute suam ipse paratus sit dependere, cupiatque mori priusquam tantum mali videat? With corrections from *DID*, b4<sup>v</sup>. *Pro Milone*, 34.93-35.98.

<sup>4</sup>*DID*, p. 201: 'Respicit autem subinde orator ab affectu ad causam. Neque enim id agit solum ut misericordiam moveat, sed ut per misericordiam id quod cupit iudicium animis extorqueat. Hinc ergo sunt illa: 'Quid vos iudices? quo tandem animo eritis?' Et: 'vos vos appello fortissimi viri' (101). Et quae paulo post sequuntur: 'at in qua causa non potuisse? et a quibus non potuisse? et quo deprecante?' (102) Verum haec ad institutum nostrum nihil pertinent, neque enim hoc loco inveniendi rationem explicamus, sed illud voluimus ostendere: ea quibus concitantur affectus, omnia ex eisdem duci locis, ex quibus ea quibus docemus. Est enim amplificatio (ut inquit Cicero) vehementis quaedam argumentatio, ut illa docendi causa sit, haec commovendi.' *Pro Milone*, 37.101-102.

<sup>5</sup> *Rhetoric*, 1385b11ff., *De oratore*, 2.51.206ff.

The peroration of *Pro Milone* had attracted commentary before. Quintilian analysed its use of personation. He explained that since Milo had admitted having killed Clodius, it would have been intolerable for him to plead for his own life, so Cicero in his own person lamented for what would happen to him and to the country in Milo's absence. At the same time he commended Milo for his staunchness of mind.<sup>6</sup> Loschi's account of the *Pro Milone* picks up the question of Cicero's use of the figure of Milo. He points to the emphasis in the *exordium* on the brave and honourable citizen defending himself and to Cicero's praise of Milo's character, as well as to the ending. To Loschi it seems that Cicero pleads to the judges and reminds them of Milo's deeds, while Milo appears strong and confident of justice. He notices that Cicero addresses in turn the people, Milo and the judges.

In fact at the end this man seeks to arouse pity, when he shows that he cannot speak because of the tears which Milo did not wish to be defended with, as he shows that he always trusts in the law and is a brave man. And in this way he briefly rounds off this whole speech and nothing more beautiful, pleasing, subtle, and finally more elevated and finely wrought than this can be imagined.<sup>7</sup>

Agricola differs from both of them in commenting on the peroration section by section. He follows Quintilian in drawing attention to Cicero's use of his own voice and feelings, and of the persona of Milo. By following the sequence of the speech, however, Agricola gives a better idea of the effect of Cicero's switches between different voices and his changes of style.

### *Theory of Moving*

The first chapter of book three contains a general treatment of emotional manipulation. Emotion is defined as an impetus of mind by which we are impelled to desire or reject something more vehemently than we would in a relaxed state of mind.<sup>8</sup> We desire the good or the apparent good and we reject what we believe to be harmful.

Agricola's chief model for emotional reaction involves two elements:

---

<sup>6</sup> *Institutio oratoria*, 6.1.24-27.

<sup>7</sup> *Asconius Paedianus in Orationes M. Tullii Ciceronis...ac Commentariis Antonii Lusci Vincentini* (Strasbourg, 1520), p. 209: 'Concludens etenim hic misericordiam captat, cum ostendit se loqui non posse prae lachrymis quibus defendi Milo non vult, ut eum semper ostendat in iure confidere, et virum fortem esse. Et sic breviter concludit hanc totam orationem qua nihil pulchrius, nil suavius nil denique altius, atque artificiosius fingi potest.'

<sup>8</sup> *DID*, p. 378: 'Affectus autem mihi non aliud videtur esse quam impetus quidam animi, quo ad appetendum aversandumve aliquid vehementius quam pro quietu statu mentis impellimur.'

the thing which happens and the person to whom it happens. If the thing which happens befits the person, we are pleased; if not, we are moved either to anger or to compassion. The key idea is that there should be a fit, which Agricola expresses with the word *dignum* (worthy, fitting), between the person and the thing which happens (378). He then introduces some reflections which modify this basic model. In those emotions which affect everyone, it is often sufficient to concentrate on the thing itself, since everyone favours themselves. Anything good seems deserved, anything unpleasant unmerited. One cannot always make a neat distinction between person and thing. Sometimes we judge whether an action was good or bad solely on the basis of our feeling towards the person involved. Equally there are occasions on which the judgement of the person arises entirely from the events. Some more general points follow. In dealing with emotions there is no difference between what is, and what appears. Some emotions are long lasting, others briefer; the latter are more capable of being worked up but are also more easily allayed. In orations and literary compositions, we are most often concerned with hate and pity. He refers the reader to Aristotle's *Rhetoric* for a fuller discussion of the nature of each of the emotions and of what stimulates them (378-380).

It seems to me that whoever is not without common intelligence, when he compares the mind of his audience with the thing he is going to speak of, and when he understands what he wants to do with his speech, will not fail to find what kind of emotion the listener needs to be seized by.<sup>9</sup>

General discussions of emotional persuasion are rare in rhetoric books. The classic account was Aristotle's, but according to F. Solmsen, it was taken up only by Cicero, and only very sketchily by him.<sup>10</sup> Quintilian discusses the arousing of emotions in book six, mainly in connection with delivery, and with the personal resources of the orator. Great emotion will be aroused by someone who can feel great emotion, through the imagination, and can project it with astonishing vividness (*ἐνόργετος*).<sup>11</sup> This is the way in which one might speak of great acting. Some of what Agricola says (the emphasis on experience, the analysis of pity) can be connected with Aristotle and Cicero, but the rest appears to be original extrapolation and

<sup>9</sup> *DID*, p. 380: 'Mihi videtur, quisquis communis sensus plane non erit expers, cum rem de qua dicturus sit cum auditoris contulerit animo, cunque perspiciat quid dicendo velit efficere, non latitum eum in quod affectus genus sit rapiendus auditor.'

<sup>10</sup> F. Solmsen, 'Aristotle and Cicero on the Orator's Playing upon the Feelings', *Classical Philology*, 33 (1938), pp. 390-404.

<sup>11</sup> *Institutio oratoria*, 6.2.20-36.

simplification from them. Agricola pays proper regard to the theory of emotions from Aristotle's *Rhetoric*. Most other rhetorics deal with emotional manipulation only in connection with the peroration, and divide it into two classes corresponding to prosecution and defence.<sup>12</sup>

Agricola distinguishes three ways in which a speaker or writer deals with emotion. In the first case, the speaker expresses emotion in the choice of language, taking on the words appropriate to different emotions. Examples of this will be found in tragedy, for the sterner emotions, and in comedy, for the milder ones. It is necessary to express thoughts, vows, complaints, desires, prayers and arguments in appropriate language so that the movement of the aroused mind is imitated. In the imitation of emotions is founded that expressive force which we call tone of language (*color dictionis*) (382).

In satire we see in the three whose works survive, Horace, Persius and Juvenal, that the practice is the same and the same subject-matter is treated. This is that they should correct manners and behaviour, and censure vices. Each however followed his own tone (*color*). Horace aspired to an

---

<sup>12</sup> But Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, 6.2.2, states that there is scope for emotional manipulation in every part of the oration. Although one might expect rhetoric manuals to devote a good deal of space to the manipulation of emotions, in fact they treat it in a rather limited way. It is comparatively rare to read that a particular figure is associated with a particular emotional effect. One can easily understand why this happens, since there is no automatic relation between a given verbal structure and the production of a given emotion. Rather the emotion depends on a combination of factors: content, contrast of handling, the suitability and connotations of the words employed, and the tone of voice. Indeed the very expectation that a given structure would have a given effect might make the use of that structure less expressive and so less effecting, particularly if it led the speaker to neglect the other elements.

Aristotle's *Rhetoric* stands alone among ancient rhetorics in giving a theoretical discussion of the nature and causes of a whole range of emotions (*Rhetoric*, 1378a21-1388b31). There is a much briefer general discussion in *De oratore*, 2.51.206-52.211. Other rhetorics concentrate their treatment of emotion on two aspects: amplification, in which particularly intense language and figures are used, in the conclusion, to arouse pity or opprobrium for the accused; and *fantasia*, the power of the orator to feel emotion through the intensity of his imagination and therefore to convey emotion to his audience (*Rhetorica ad Herennium*, 2.30.47-31.50, *De oratore*, 2.45.189-47.195, *Institutio oratoria*, 6.2.23-36, 8.pr.12, 8.4). Although the imagined emotion evidently has a verbal level of expression, it seems to emerge even more strongly in delivery. In discussions of style in the rhetoric manuals, pleasurable effects are spoken of more than emotional effects (e.g. *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, 4.13.19, 14.21, 15.21, 17.24, 23.32, 24.34, 25.35, *Institutio oratoria*, 8.pr.7, 8.3.2-5, 6.4, 9.1.19-21, 2.66, 96., 3.4, 27). Brian Vickers claims that the analysis of the emotional effects of different elements of style is one of rhetoric's most distinctive and most successful features, *In Defence of Rhetoric* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 294-339 (and elsewhere), but compare F. Solmsen, 'Aristotle and Cicero on the Orator's Playing upon the Feelings'. Debora Shuger claims that emotional power is the definitive feature of the grand style, *Sacred Rhetoric* (Princeton, 1988), pp. 17, 46-48, 119-120, 193, but it seems to me that emotional persuasion is a consequence of this style (and of others) rather than something which constitutes it.

appearance of laughing, to fix blame (as he said himself) with noble amusement (*ingenuo ludo*). Persius took on a more severe and almost philosophical character. So he censures by teaching and teaches by criticising. Juvenal mostly puts forward an image of righteous indignation and anger. For this reason a poetic construction that is a little more assured and more fluent suited him better, as did both wit that was largely more bitter and also a looser freedom of language.<sup>13</sup>

Agricola makes this comparison casually as though it was a commonplace. But although it was quoted by G. Fabricius in his edition of Horace of 1571, and although Casaubon's comparison in his *Prolegomena in Persium* is parallel, though fuller, it is hard to find a source earlier than Agricola. Quintilian had noted Horace's purity of style and Persius's high reputation. Horace himself observed that joking is more effective than bitterness.<sup>14</sup>

The second way of handling emotion involves describing someone in the grip of a particular emotion. Agricola cites an example from Seneca's *Oedipus*. He distinguishes this mode from the first by comparing two passages from *Aeneid* 4. In the first (line 305 following), Dido accuses Aeneas of treachery and cruelty in planning to leave her. The language is tinged with her love frenzy. In the second passage (line 365 following), the emotion itself is displayed. Unfortunately Agricola does not specify the features which make the difference, but presumably he has in mind the extra elevation of language, the greater vehemence, the shortened questions and the more dramatic sound effects of the latter passage (383).

The third mode of handling emotion is the attempt to arouse an emotion in others. When we are speaking on behalf of other people this involves setting out what is happening, or is anticipated (is it bad or good?) and the individuals concerned (are they deserving or undeserving of it?). Occasionally it is also necessary to discuss the person responsible for it.

---

<sup>13</sup> *DID*, pp. 382-383: 'In satyra videmus, idem tribus illis qui adhuc extant, Horatio, Persio, et Juvenali, institutum esse, eandemque rem tractari. Ea est ut mores vitamque emendent et reprehendant vitia. Suum tamen quisque secutus est colorem. Horatius ridentis speciem, et ingenuo (ut ipse ait) culpam defigere ludo affectavit. Persius severiorem et prope philosophi personam accepit. Docendo itaque reprehendit, et reprehendendo docet. Juvenalis indignantis et irati plerunque praefert speciem. Quare erector paulo et profluentior carminis compositio, magis decuerit eum, sicut et sal amarior plerunque et solutior orationis libertas.' Phrissemius (1528), p. 333 comments on Agricola's memory lapse here. The phrase 'from Horace' comes from Persius, *Satire* 5, 16-18.

<sup>14</sup> Horace, *Opera*, ed. G. Fabricius (Leipzig, 1571), B1<sup>v</sup>-2<sup>r</sup>. I am grateful to Dilwyn Knox for this reference. Persius, *Satires*, ed. Casaubon, 3rd edn., (London, 1647), fols E3<sup>r</sup>, E5<sup>v</sup>. *Institutio oratoria*, 10.1.94. Horace, *Satires*, 1.10.14f., Persius, *Satire* 1, 116-118. For medieval references to satire, none of them parallel to Agricola, see U. Kindermann, *Satyra* (Nürnberg, 1978), A. Minnis et al. eds, *Medieval Literary Theory and Criticism* (Oxford, 1988).

When the case is our own, it is usually enough to concentrate on what is happening or anticipated, though sometimes we will also have to project something about our own character. Agricola cites examples of Cicero working from the person only, from the event only, and from both. He advises against extensive arguments, since it is sufficient to establish the two conditions required. With some audiences, one need only begin and the emotion follows rapidly. In others, once the emotion has been built up it breaks out, like a stream rushing down a mountainside (383-384).

### *Amplification*

Since emotions which are aroused too quickly pass rapidly, one must take care to build up strong emotions gradually.<sup>15</sup> This is the role of amplification. In order for something to be worthy of great emotion, greatness must be added to it.

Some things are great in themselves (religion, the nation, the family, honour). Others are very important to particular classes of people (food to the greedy, knowledge to students). One way to increase the audience's estimate of the importance of some issue is to show that it contributes to preserving one of these. The more arguments of this type we can crowd in on top of each other, the greater the thing will seem to be.<sup>16</sup> Agricola suggests a way of drawing all the features listed above into an argument, by suggesting that each of them in turn will be threatened unless the measure we advocate is agreed. It is important to consider the tastes of the audience: what they like and what emotions they are most prone to. This will show us where to direct all our attempts at emotional persuasion (386-387).

Some things are made to seem great by comparisons, which may be implicit or explicit. In implicit comparisons, the subject you are dealing with can be broken into many parts, or you can make it seem greater by going into everything which is implied. Since what is present is more impressive than what was or what will be, something can be made greater by the kind of lively description (*ἐνάρπεια*) which makes it seem present.

In explicit comparisons, something is said to be greater than other named things. It is especially forceful when one person or thing is said to be greater than all the others because of a quality which it alone possesses, as when Cicero praises Caesar above all other generals for his clemency.

---

<sup>15</sup> *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, 2.31.50, *De inventione*, 1.56.109.

<sup>16</sup> Compare *Partitiones oratoriae*, 16.56.

Other comparisons, however, can be used to make clemency seem an unimportant virtue for a general to possess. Both kinds of amplification, from things which are established as great, and from comparisons, can be drawn from all the topics. Using the topics in both these ways is suggested as an exercise for the dialectician. Amplification is particularly important in epideictic oratory. A comparison from Isocrates's *Praise of Helen* is discussed (387-390).

In diminution, the main thing is to call attention back to the thing in question, to try to remove the accretions of comparison. Emotions may be counteracted by their opposites, or dissolved using humour. A piece of ridicule by Cicero and Demosthenes's use of a joke are considered. The main requirements for amplification are natural talent and practice. The precepts of Cicero and Quintilian may also be helpful (390-391).

One can find similarities between Agricola's discussion of amplification and the four methods of amplification recommended by Quintilian (augmentation, comparison, reasoning and accumulation).<sup>17</sup> Quintilian, however, treats amplification as part of style, and that is the approach of each of his methods, where Agricola treats it more as part of reasoning, something to do with the invention of impressive connections and comparisons. Agricola's technique of implicit comparison (not a very helpful piece of naming) seems to be related to Quintilian's discussion of ἐνόπεια, rather than to his instructions for amplification. Implicit comparison becomes, in turn, a possible source for Erasmus's *De copia*.<sup>18</sup>

### *Pleasing*

Pleasing ('bringing in something in such a way that the audience enjoys sensing or perceiving it')<sup>19</sup> can only be an aim of language when it is taken alongside teaching and moving. Language proves something as a result of the nature of the things in question, and their ordering in relation to each other, but it pleases only according to the character of the audience.<sup>20</sup> Thus, while the method of teaching is universal, the method of pleasing depends on the particular nature of the audience. All the same, many things are said in order to please. But these concern the intention of the speaker, not the intention of the thing spoken (204).

---

<sup>17</sup> *Institutio oratoria*, 8.4.

<sup>18</sup> *Institutio oratoria*, 8.3.61ff. See chapter 15 below.

<sup>19</sup> *DID*, p. 198: 'Delectare est tale aliquid adhibere, cuius sensu atque perceptione is qui accipit gaudet.'

<sup>20</sup> *DID*, p. 204: 'delectandi non ita, quoniam diversa sunt hominum ingenia'.

For the purpose of food is to appease hunger, but yet the host welcomes the guest much more pleasingly if he has prepared and provided food sumptuously with the aim of tickling his palate rather than satisfying his hunger. This will still be brought about by food, not however in so far as it is food but as it is transformed by the master into an instrument for satisfying extravagant desire. Therefore in exactly the same way as the effect of food is to nourish and strengthen the body, and contrary to this the person who is concerned with pleasure very often eats poisons, and things which cause great illnesses, so sometimes things which would be faults from the point of view of following the order of things and the order of speaking count as virtues when we consider the pleasure of the audience.<sup>21</sup>

For this purpose we sometimes digress from our subject, or spend many words saying over again what could be said briefly once.

Poets also very often drift from plausible things to things that are incredible. They also confuse the order of things, saying afterwards what comes before, and before what comes after. These and many other points which would be errors of fact, and therefore of language, since language was established to express things, nevertheless can be virtues of talent because they please. However these things are often combined, with the result that the language which pleases most may also teach best of all. But there are also times when pleasure takes precedence over persuasion.<sup>22</sup>

Agricola concludes that, while moving (at least as far as invention is concerned) is closely related to teaching (and therefore belongs to dialectic), pleasing, because it is concerned with the audience, more correctly belongs to rhetoric (205).

In this section Agricola treats pleasing as separate from topical invention, though he agrees that pleasing is an important aspect of language and can make a contribution to teaching. There will even be occasions on which the overall purpose of persuasion (the speaker's aim) will be served best by concentrating on pleasing the audience to the extent of disrupting the overall scheme of the oration (the aim of the expression).

---

<sup>21</sup> *DID*, pp. 204-205: 'Quemadmodum enim cibi finis est探寻 famem, at convivator, quo gratius excipiat convivam, si lautijs apparavit idque prospexit, quo pacto non satietati illius sed gulae satisfaceret. Quanquam id cibo quoque fiat, non tamen quatenus est cibus, sed in instrumentum explendae luxuria est a domino translatus. Ut ergo cibi est alere, et firmare corpus. Contra, qui voluptatem spectat persaepe ingerit noxia, et magnorum irritamenta morborum. Sic quae aliquando rerum dictionisque ordinem sequenti possent videri culpanda, dum audiens captamus voluptatem, inter laudes numerantur dicentis.'

<sup>22</sup> *DID*, p. 205: 'Poëtae quoque persaepe a fide rerum ad incredibilia delabuntur. Confundunt etiam ordinem rerum ut quod prius erat, dicant posterius, quod posterius, prius. Haec aliaque permulta id genus, quae rerum essent nimirum vitia atque proinde orationis, quia significantis ea rebus est instituta, ingeniorum tamen sunt (quoniam placent) virtutes. Sunt tamen et ista persaepe coniuncta, ut quae delectat praeципue, optime etiam doceat oratio, sed et fidei quandoque locum occupat voluptas.'

### *Theory of pleasing*

Agricola retracts his separation of pleasing and the topics at the beginning of book three chapter 4 when he explains that since pleasure in language can arise from content, it must be possible to use topical invention to discover material suited to pleasing a given audience. Since pleasure is an excitement of the cognitive faculty it must have two aspects: excitement of the senses and excitement of the mind, both of which may be recalled in words. One kind of pleasure in language arises from the things discussed, the other kind from the linguistic features: the sounds, words, structures, and routes to meaning employed. Agricola lists things which please the senses only, the senses and the intellect, and the intellect only.

Things which please the mind: whatever teaches; what is great, admirable, unexpected, unheard of; the investigation of things which are hidden; information about antiquity or about far away places, the sayings and deeds of great men; and all types of acts of surpassing virtue.<sup>23</sup>

He explains that we can bring such things into what we say through transitions (especially comparisons and metaphors, but also oblique beginnings) and through digressions (394-396). The discussion of how pleasure may arise from the way something is expressed leads to a more general aesthetic of discourse.

In this aspect the first thing is that the work (*oratio*) should contain strong emotions, conversations of characters, discussions and unexpected occurrences. Although these things may seem to belong to the subject-matter, the fact that they please comes from the expression. The reason is, that if we see those same things, for the most part they not only do not please, but actually offend; therefore in a piece of writing (*oratio*) the pleasure is not so much in the thing itself as in the imitative language by which it is expressed. And in painting most things are very pleasing solely because of the imitation alone and we admire not so much the subjectmatter which is shown in the painting, as the skill of the imitator. In exactly the same way, when in a written composition (*oratio*), words are given to characters according to the nature and condition of each, and a representation (*figura*) of their minds and all their emotions is shaped, the composition succeeds in making the subject-matter seem not reported but rather enacted and, through a sort of insubstantial image, the mind of the listener establishes itself as though in the midst of the action and its upheavals. This should also be attributed to language because it comes

---

<sup>23</sup> *DID*, p. 395: 'Mentem (cuius proprium est opus veri bonique perquisitio) delectant omnia quaecunque docent: quae magna, admiranda, inopinata, inexpectata, inaudita sunt, reconditarum rerum pervestigatio, notitia vetustatis, et rerum in longinquu positarum cognitio, egregia magnorum virorum dicta factaque, et praecclare in omni genere virtutis acta.'

about through the power of language and not as a result of the nature of the subject-matter. Of all (types of writing) the poem is most capable of this charm. Because the language does not follow from the subject-matter, but rather the subject-matter is suited to the delight of language, and, everything is shaped so as to be most pleasurable, therefore the poem has the greatest freedom to strive for this beauty in language. History is next, more severe and more perplexed as to how it can divert and still preserve the truth. A political speech, both in narrations and even while arguing, attributes emotions and their expression to true or imagined characters, and it indulges itself to no small degree in this gracefulness of language. Nor indeed did the philosophers lack this good quality, in their dialogues. One can see in Plato that the disputing characters are so carefully shaped that you seem not to hear the words but to watch the expressions, not of Plato but of his characters.<sup>24</sup>

The basic idea here, that in painting we are delighted more by the skill of the imitation than by the choice of subject, seems to be a commonplace of classical and Renaissance art criticism.<sup>25</sup> That a writer's language should imitate the action of minds and emotions seems to be implicit in some classical theories of imitation, though it is hard to find this presented as a criterion for evaluation.<sup>26</sup> Agricola's exploration of the reader's position

<sup>24</sup> *DID*, pp. 396-397: 'Qua in parte primum est, ut habeat oratio motus animorum, colloquia personarum, consilia eventusque rerum inopinatos. Quae quidem quanquam ad res pertinere possint videri, ex oratione tamen capiunt quod delectant. Argumento est, quod eadem haec magna ex parte, si videamus, non modo non delectent, sed offendant; idcirco in oratione, non tam res ipsa quam imitatio orationis qua exprimuntur ista, voluptati est. Et quemadmodum in pictura, pleraque gratissima sunt propter solam imitationem, nec tam rem (quae pictura expressa est) quam ingenium miratur imitantis, sic cum in oratione, personis sua pro cuiusque natura conditioneque verba tribuuntur, et animorum affectuumque omnium figura effingitur, idque consequitur oratio, ut non dici sed agi videatur res, et inani quadam imagine audiens animus velut medium se ipse intra actum iactationemque rerum constituit. Id quoniam sit orationis virtute, non rerum natura, idcirco est etiam orationi iure tribuendum. Cuius quidem gratiae capacissimum est omnium poëma. Quia enim non rem sequitur oratio, sed voluptati orationis res aptatur, utque maxime placitura sunt sic omnia finguntur, idcirco summa est ei captandae venustatis istius in oratione libertas. Proxima est historia, severior tamen et contractioris frontis, ut quam, illesa veritate, ludere oporteat. Civilis etiam oratio in narrationibus, saepe etiam et inter argumentandum, vel veris personis vel fictis, affectus suaque verba tribuit, et non parum hac orationis gratia sibi indulget. Ne in dialogis quidem philosophi expertes huius laudes fuere. Est apud Platonem videre, tam diligenter effictas disserentes personas, ut non Platonis sed personae, non verba audire, sed vultus intueri videarisi.'

<sup>25</sup> *Poetics*, 1448b4f, Pliny the Elder, *Historia Naturalis*, 34.38; 35.60-61, 65-66. M. Baxandall, *Giotto and the Orators* (London, 1971), especially text IV, and his discussion of it, pp. 70-78, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy* (London, 1972), pp. 117-121. Further discussion of this issue in my article, 'Agricola's Use of the Comparison between Writing and the Visual Arts', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 55 (1992).

<sup>26</sup> *Poetics*, 1448a1-8, b4f, 1454a12f, 1455a20, 1456a33-34. R. McKeon, 'The Concept of Imitation in Antiquity', in R. S. Crane ed., *Critics and Criticism* (Chicago, 1961), pp. 164-165.

and his further point, that in a poem subject-matter is in some ways subordinate to beauty of expression, seem to be more original developments. In applying the idea of pleasure in language to Plato's *Dialogues*, he emphasizes the role of expression in creation and communication of thought and character.

Agricola also brings in some of the tactics rhetoricians use to make an audience approve of them. He is careful to leave more strictly linguistic effects, concerned with vocabulary and stylistic ornament, to the treatise on style.

### *Techniques for pleasing*

Chapters five, six and seven are devoted to *copia* (fullness of language and material) and brevity. He regards full and brief speech as involved with pleasing, but includes them here since they are also part of invention. *Copia* and amplification are in some ways similar cases. He begins with *copia* which he associates with 'saying much'. *Copia* is generated in exposition when we not only say the essential headings of things but also lay out their parts in some detail. To illustrate this he compares a brief summary of the plot of the first book of the *Aeneid* ('Because Juno hated the Trojans, she threw the force of a tempest at Aeneas's fleet when he was sailing from Sicily; he was carried off by its impact to Africa where he was received most welcomingly by Dido') with a much fuller version of the plot. He emphasizes that even this version does not account for everything which is found in book one (400-401).

For the poet, whose intellect and judgement were extremely acute, clearly did not think it mattered greatly what actually happened to Aeneas, or in what order. Only a very slight report of these events had reached him. However, having chosen the character of this man, he wanted to set out, as if to be looked at in a mirror, the variety of human affairs and the life and habits of mankind. In order to give greater pleasure and so make these things agreeable, he spread them out over a broad area so that he could express the beauty and grace of language and subject-matter, which are concealed in more constricted spaces, in proper fullness throughout the poem.<sup>27</sup>

While these comments certainly help to take his point about the uses of

---

<sup>27</sup> *DID*, pp. 401-402: 'Poëta enim acerrimi ingenii iudicique, non magni sane putavit, qui fuerint casus aut ordo rerum Aeneae, quarum etiam vix tenuis ad ipsum pervenerat fama, sed sumpta illius persona, voluit tanquam in speculo quodam varietatem rerum humanarum vitamque et mores hominum spectandos proponere. Quae cuncta, ut maiore voluptate commendaret, late fudit, quo orationis rerumque decorem et gratiam, quae in angustioribus delitescunt, in ipsa amplitudine per omnes posset numeros explicare.'

*copia* to the writer, they amount to a critical observation about the purpose and technique of the whole poem. They can be connected with his earlier comments on the way different kinds of writer please. Plot function, model character and variety of incident and language are combined in the organisation of the book.

He compares the treatment of battles, in history, where one is given an outline of the order of battle and the names of a few leaders, and in poetry, in which numerous single combats are described in detail.

Speaking much in argumentation consists in deducing many questions from the main one and in applying many argumentations and extra proofs to the questions deduced. The final way of speaking much involves saying the same thing in many different ways, but that is more a matter for style and ornament than for invention (402-403).

Brevity consists in concentrating on the chief headings, and in omitting whatever is not strictly required. Words can be saved in exposition by allowing preceding things to be inferred from what follows, or succeeding things from their causes. Brevity in argumentation is achieved by concentrating on the main question and by leaving implicit some of the propositions of an argument (405-407).

The final chapter of the three offers some slightly miscellaneous practical advice on when to use which mode. In general one should aim for a medium between *copia* and brevity, but it is better to err on the side of *copia*, since not making oneself clear is the worst fault of all. Brevity may be best suited to very favourable or learned audiences. A very large audience will need some of the important passages to be brought out very fully (408-411).

These three chapters are quite short. Nevertheless, taken together, they represent the first attempt to give separate treatment to *copia* and brevity as different ideals of style. In Cicero and Quintilian, *copia* had been an incidental term implying success in inventing material,<sup>28</sup> but the idea there seems to be 'a broad range of ideas and arguments' more than 'a style which is thick in texture' or even 'the addition of extra matter or extra words and arguments to produce thickness of texture'. The medieval authors of the *poetriae* devoted substantial sections of their works to *amplificatio* and *abbreviatio*.<sup>29</sup> Erasmus's methods for producing *copia* of

---

<sup>28</sup> *De oratore*, 1.19.85, 2.14.58, *Institutio oratoria*, 5.10.100, 7.pr.1, 10.1.69, 10.5.3, *Ad Herennium*, 1.1.1.

<sup>29</sup> E. Faral, *Les Arts poétiques du XIIe et du XIIIe siècle* (Paris, 1924).

thought can be derived from them and from Agricola's chapters on copia and amplification but Erasmus claimed that he saw these chapters only after writing *De copia*.<sup>30</sup>

### *Disposition*

I have written more on disposition than any Latin author whose work survives. I am not such a fool as to say 'better'.<sup>31</sup>

It will be difficult to find what Quintilian thought could not be found.<sup>32</sup>

Agricola was proud of having given a reasonably thorough account of disposition, but he was also anxious about his chances of success. He had no doubt of the importance for the writer of acquiring skill at organisation of material. In arguing that disposition belongs with invention, as part of dialectic, he made a comparison with the visual arts.

For just as no one would call someone an accomplished painter or sculptor who could portray perfectly well each individual limb but did not know how to join them together and arrange them into an attitude so that they would imitate the form of whatever movement or action he wished, in the same way no one will ever deserve even the name of dialectician who knows how to find all the things which will create belief but does not know how to dispose and order them so as to make their intended audience believe them.<sup>33</sup>

However convinced he was of the necessity of discussing disposition, he was equally aware of the paucity of what had previously been achieved and of the difficulty of laying down precepts, since correct disposition depends so much on the aims and circumstances of each particular work. In the rhetoric textbooks, as we have seen, because invention is organised according to the four parts of the oration, large-scale disposition is reduced to discussing whether to omit one of the parts or alter their usual order. *De oratore* adds a few remarks about organising arguments (put the strongest

<sup>30</sup> See chapter 15 below. G. J. Engelhardt, 'Medieval Vestiges in the Rhetoric of Erasmus', *PMLA*, 63 (1948), pp. 739-744.

<sup>31</sup> *Unediertre Briefe*, p. 19: 'Scripsi de dispositione plura quam quisquam qui extet apud nos. Tam demens vero non sum, ut meliora dicam.'

<sup>32</sup> *DID*, p. 413: 'At difficile erit invenire quod Quintilianus creditit inveniri non posse.' *Institutio oratoria*, 7.Pr.4.

<sup>33</sup> *DID*, p. 197: 'Quemadmodum enim nemo pictorem quempiam aut factorem consummatum dixerit, qui omnia quidem seorsum membra exacte exprimeret, iungere autem ea nesciret et in eam habitudinem componere ut motus aut actus alicuius quam vellet imaginem imitarentur, sic ne dialectici quidem nomen sibi vendicabit, qui omnia facienda fidei invenire sciatur, sed disponere et in ordinem redigere, ut fidem cui destinantur facere possint, nesciat.' Compare Horace, *Ars poetica*, 1-5, where a different point is being made.

first, keep something back for the peroration). *Institutio oratoria* repeats this and adds some further remarks about weighing up all the evidence on both sides and working from general to particular, or vice versa.<sup>34</sup> In the dialectic textbooks the forms of argumentation are the largest scale compositions commonly discussed. *Posterior Analytics* considers the organisation of a science, from the most basic and general to the most particular, and *Topica*, book 8 adds some advice on the tactical conduct of both roles in the disputation.

While Agricola makes use of all these principles, and characteristically explores and refines them through his analysis of examples, his most significant contribution is to make disposition something which has to be thought about in each particular case, rather than being taken for granted by the sequence of operations involved in invention. His account begins by discussing foundations and principles, gradually works from large scale disposition (the oration, the poem) to small scale (the individual argument), and concludes with a discussion of debate.

Following Cicero, disposition is defined as ‘the ordering and distribution of things which shows what belongs and should be placed in which places’.<sup>35</sup> Agricola distinguishes three kinds of order: natural order, when the order is fixed, as when one year follows the previous one; arbitrary order, when there is no fixed order, or when we do not follow it; and artificial order, when we upset the order of things and place later things first, as when Aeneas’s sea voyage precedes the description of the fall of Troy. These three orders, which we might treat as orders of presentation, are juxtaposed with four types of natural order, or four senses of the word ‘before’, *prius*. We speak of priority in relation to time, in relation to the necessity of existence (for example when ‘animal’ is prior to ‘man’), in relation to place, and in relation to dignity (413-415). These

<sup>34</sup> *De oratore*, 2.72.291, 77.314, *Institutio oratoria*, 7.1.4-11, 23-28. The Greek epideictic tradition provides a more detailed treatment of disposition. Menander Rhetor (Third century AD) lists a number of genres of epideictic which have different orders and also the possibility of an informal treatment of order. These genres may well have been well known in the ancient world, but although the Greek texts were printed in the Aldine *Rhetores Graeci* (1508), the epideictic genres do not seem to be mentioned in the Latin rhetorical tradition before J. C. Scaliger’s *Poeticae Libri Septem* (1561). F. Cairns, *Generic Composition in Greek and Roman Poetry* (Edinburgh, 1972), especially pp. 18-40, ‘The Poeticae Libri Septem of Julius Caesar Scaliger: An Unexplored Source’, *Res Publica Literarum*, 9 (1986), pp. 49-57, D. A. Russell and N. G. Wilson, *Menander Rhetor* (Oxford, 1981). I am grateful to Professor Cairns for drawing my attention to this source but I do not think that Agricola was aware of it.

<sup>35</sup> *DID*, p. 413: ‘ordo et distributio rerum, quae demonstrat, quid quibus locis conveniat et collocandum sit.’ *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, 1.2.3, compare *De inventione*, 1.7.9.

seem to be derived from the discussion in Aristotle's *Categories*.<sup>36</sup>

### *Large Scale Structure*

Agricola considers four classes of large-scale structure: poetry, history, the handing on of knowledge, and the oration. Both poetry and the oration follow the natural order of time, but where history observes it quite strictly, poetry is much more free, since it aims chiefly at delight. While poetry follows the order of time of the speaker of the poem, it may alter the natural sequence of events described, by beginning in the middle. In the *Aeneid*, Aeneas is driven to Africa by the storm before he tells Dido of the fall of Troy and of his wanderings, but in the actual sequence of time these latter events occurred first. In the same way, in Terence's *Andria*, the shipwreck of Phannia, the earliest event in the story, is made known at the end of the play, at the same moment as the marriage (416-417).

History, whose first law is truth, has to follow natural order, not only in point of time but also in causation. But simultaneous events cannot always be narrated together. Agricola gives examples in which Tacitus and Livy continue to relate events united by geography, even when this involves later going back in time to resume the sequence of events elsewhere (417-418).

For teaching particular subjects, Agricola sets out three principles borrowed from Aristotle. As a preliminary, erroneous opinions of earlier authors should be disposed of. Then one should begin from things which are better known and move on to what is less well known. When this is adapted to the topics it involves beginning with the most general genus and moving down through the various levels of species. Once one arrives at single things, one will define them, give their parts and nature, then their adjacents, force, actions, subjects, and the other things which surround substance. In the third place one should discuss only what is relevant at each stage. Here Agricola, like Ramus after him, criticizes Aristotle for talking about the vacuum in *Physics* rather than in *De coelo* (418-420).

Once he has set out these principles, Agricola emphasizes the variety of possible sequences in which information can be passed on, by giving examples of different kinds of order: Pliny describing the visible creation beginning with the heavens and moving down to the earth and its inhabitants; Valerius Maximus organising his exemplary biographies according to the virtues. Ovid connects his *Metamorphoses* according to

---

<sup>36</sup> *Categories*, 14a26-14b9.

shared details which seem quite arbitrary. In *Germania*, Tacitus moves from saying that the Germans have no gold and silver, through their lack of iron, to discussing their weapons and military organisation. Agricola adds that Tacitus would have been obliged to follow a much stricter order if he had been writing an epideictic oration (422-423).

Turning at last to the oration, Agricola recalls the principles of the four-part oration, which he had dealt with earlier (308-312). Then he discusses variants of the basic form, in which particular elements are omitted, repeated or placed in a different sequence, working from examples in Cicero's speeches, notably *Pro Cluentio*, *Pro Milone*, and *Pro Murena* (426-427). He treats the four-part oration as one form among many, and shows that, like the others, it is subject to variation according to its subject, speaker and circumstances.

### *Questions, Arguments, Debates*

From overall organisation Agricola descends to consider in turn: the order of questions in a case which involves more than one; the order of arguments in epideictic and persuasive speeches; the order of propositions within each argument, and the tactical management of debates. Since this sequence is not well organised, I shall pick out a few of his general observations and a few of his examples.

Agricola begins by making a distinction between separate questions which come up in the same work and questions which are linked. With separate questions, the speaker can choose which to put first. Probably whichever is most important or most difficult should come first, for the resolution of such questions will contribute to the audience's opinion of the trustworthiness of the speaker and will thus help in the proof of later questions (428-429).

Whenever belief in one of the questions depends in any way at all on the other, then the one which helps in proving the other must be considered first. Agricola develops this point by considering different ways in which one question helps in proving another. That the existence and direction of this connection can depend on the person you are arguing against is shown by considering the two questions 'is the soul immortal?' and 'is virtue the highest good?' If you are arguing against a Platonist, you will want to put the former first. The Epicurean will accept neither, but perhaps the same order is best. Against a Stoic, either can come first, but putting the latter first is probably stronger (429).

In law cases questions which have little to do with the question but

which attack or defend the characters of the people involved are generally treated first, because they can help in the proof of the main issue while, on the other hand, the main issue is no help in proving them. Agricola considers *Pro Murena*, *Pro Caelio* and *Pro Cluentio* as examples (430).

Questions are linked in another way when they are questions derived (by the methods set out in II, 14) from the same basic proposition. By analysing the questions derived from 'should it be numbered among the praises of Achilles that he killed Penthesilea at Troy?', Agricola works out a sequence based on the words of the proposition in turn, on what is implied in the words, and on the circumstances of the events referred to. The overriding concern in thinking about linked questions is to consider how the connection will work in the minds of the audience. Depending on their likely reaction it may be more appropriate in a given composition to move from general to specific, whereas in other cases the reverse order may be more effective. It is particularly important to begin with something which offers the hearers the possibility that you will convince them. In that sense, the beginning is the most important part of the work. But you must also begin with something that appears to be a natural place to start. It is fatal to show too much art at the beginning (430-433).

In discussing the ordering of arguments, Agricola first considers epideictic speeches.<sup>37</sup> He lists different sequences for different subjects. In this discussion it is apparent that the ordering of the speech is inseparable from its purpose. Since in epideictic orations the main aim is to please the audience and secure their admiration, it is necessary to do everything possible, by way of dividing and organising, to make the qualities being praised seem larger and more important (436-437).

With argumentative speeches those arguments on which other points rest have to come first. Thus in *Pro Milone* it was essential to establish at the outset that killing can sometimes be lawful. If there are no arguments which are logically prior then whatever will have most force with the audience should come first. Weaker arguments should be placed in the middle, and an argument which will have a strong emotional effect on the audience should come last (437-439).

In considering the organisation of propositions within arguments, Agricola's main purpose is to attack those (particularly recent philosophers) who set all arguments out pedantically in the full expected form. You need

---

<sup>37</sup> This section on epideictic can seem like an interpolation here. Perhaps it was intended to compensate for the relative neglect of epideictic elsewhere. Compare *DID*, pp. 244-246.

to learn the set forms, but you should leave them behind when you leave school. Argumentations need to be expressed elegantly, that is with variety and as part of a well written composition. The forms of argumentation are the sinews of the speech, but no one wants the sinews to be openly visible. Agricola analyses the form of some arguments from *Pro Caelio*. At times the propositions may be set out in the order expected.

'If an unmarried woman throws open her house to the desires of all' (20.49) and all the rest which follows in that sentence together add up to: 'no one can be called an adulterer who consorts with women open to the desires of all'. This is evidently the major proposition of the syllogism.

The minor proposition had to be added next: 'Clodia is a woman like this'. Cicero varied this with a figure of speech, and asked her whether she would confess that she was that sort of woman or deny it. If she denies that she is like this then Marcus Caelius does not appear to have done anything disgraceful with her. If she confesses it then what he has done cannot be called adultery because of the preceding proposition.<sup>38</sup>

In the same oration a little earlier Cicero completely reverses the order of the syllogism and places the proposition first.

'In Marcus Caelius no loose living will be found, no extravagance, no debts, no love of parties and brothels' (19.44) and so on. For this is what has to be proved.

Then when he adds 'You have heard him before in the role of accuser' (19.45), he gives the minor proposition which is that Caelius is taking the greatest pains in his pursuit of eloquence. He gives the major proposition last: 'You should know, judges, that the lusts which Caelius is accused of and the studies which I am speaking of are not easily found in the same man' (19.45).

So the syllogism would be: 'Depraved appetites cannot exist in a man who has a supreme love of studies. Caelius has a supreme love of studies, therefore there can be no depraved appetites in him.'<sup>39</sup>

---

<sup>38</sup> Agricola may misinterpret Cicero's intention in the first part of this dilemma. If Clodia denies being this sort of woman, she is so shameless that she cannot accuse Caelius of anything. Cicero's insinuation depends on his audience recognising that the hypothetical description he has given is in fact an accurate description of Clodia.

<sup>39</sup> *DID*, p. 442: "Si qua non nupta mulier (inquit) domum patefaceret omnium cupiditati" (49) et reliqua multa, quae subiicit in eam sententiam, quorum omnium haec vis est: Nemo poterit dici adulter, qui cum muliere omnium cupiditati exposita consuevit. Hoc apertum est maiorem propositionem esse ratiocinationis. Addere deinde debebat minorem: Clodia autem talis mulier est. Variavit id dicendi figura, et in eius locum interrogat eam, fateaturne talem esse se, an neget. Post ad utramque partem concludit, si neget se talem esse, ne debere quidem videri a M. Caelio petulantius quicquam cum ea factum; sin fateatur, non id videri adulterium ex praecedentium propositionum probatione.

At in eadem oratione paulo ante convertit prorsus totum ratiocinationis ordinem, primamque conclusionem ponit: 'In M. Caelio nulla luxuries reperiatur, nulli sumptus, nullum aes alienum, nulla conviviorum et lustrorum libido' (44), quaeque sequuntur. Hoc est enim, quod probandum est. Deinde cum subdit: 'Audistis antea cum accusaret' (45), minorem propositionem facit, quae est, Caelium summa eloquentiae studiorumque cura teneri.

Towards the end of this discussion, Agricola introduces the principle that general propositions on which the whole weight of a case depends should be introduced in a discreet way, so that the audience is not immediately put on guard against them (446). This principle is especially important in disputation, when the opponent will never assent to a key proposition which is obviously relevant to the question at issue. Agricola offers a worked example in which a Platonist, who is trying to persuade an Epicurean that whoever is without virtue is unhappy, has to begin by talking about very distant analogies in order to secure the concession that the soul is superior to the body (447). When the opponent denies a proposition that we want accepted, we have to offer something that looks completely different. This is when it is important to bear in mind the possibility of proof through contradiction of the opposite, and the alternative possibilities offered by questions and assertions (448-449).

Agricola's account of disposition concludes with a rather broad summary. The key is to consider everything which has been discovered in invention and to compare this with what one wants to achieve in the hearer's mind. A careful consideration of the matter in hand, its nature, force, and parts, and the rules suggested, will show which are the key propositions and arguments and how they should be fitted together.

Let us now bring all that pertains to disposition into some sort of summary. The first requirement for anyone who wishes to do well at disposition is that he should lay out in front of him the whole raw material of his invention, that is everything he is thinking of saying. Then he should decide carefully what he wants to bring about in the mind of the hearer. Then he should compare the things themselves, the parts of the things, the force and nature of them singly and together, first among themselves and then all together with the precepts. Then he will see without difficulty when the order of time should be followed, when things should be separated into their species and single things should be distinguished as if by certain boundaries: when one should be derived from another, depending on whichever is nearest or most suitable. Then he should determine how to please the audience, how to make his point and win it, and what order of questions, argumentations and propositions to observe. Disposition is to be treated thoroughly and with great care, since skill in this part is rightly praised. Just as wealth, the gift of fortune, often belongs to the unwise, but the true use of it is the property of cautious and learned men: so *copia* of invention is sometimes given to ungoverned and almost mad intelligences,

---

Postremo maiorem addit: 'Atque scitote iudices, eas cupiditates quae obiiciuntur Caelio, atque haec studia de quibus disputo, non facile in eodem homine esse posse' (45). Ut sit ratiocinatio: Non possunt in eo in quo est summus studiorum amor, esse et pravae cupiditates; in Caelio est summus studiorum amor; non possunt ergo in eo esse pravae cupiditates.' *Pro Caelio*, 19.44-45, 20.49-50.

but beauty of disposition and order are formed by skill and judgement. Of these, as the former is a sign of a happier nature so the latter indicates a more cultivated discipline. Both are to be wished for, but the latter is more praiseworthy.<sup>40</sup>

### Conclusion

Agricola's discussion of emotional manipulation combines theory of how emotions are aroused with acute discussion of literary examples. While there is not the thorough general analysis of emotional effects one might wish for, Agricola does at least introduce some general principles. He avoids the tendency in rhetoric to discuss emotional manipulation purely as an element of the peroration.<sup>41</sup> Earlier accounts of emotion had laid great stress on the imagination (*fantasia*) of the speaker, on his need to feel emotions in order to communicate them. Agricola's account is more generative and explanatory, and it presents a procedure which anyone ought to be able to follow; but its lack of the element of mystery or individual talent can make it seem less satisfactory as an explanation. Of course Agricola may have wished to resist the tendency, implicit in dwelling on imagination, to make emotional manipulation part of delivery.

The general treatment of pleasing is of less importance to Agricola, and is less satisfactory in itself. However it too combines theory, analysis and practical techniques. The techniques of *copia* and brevity are of general application, suiting many purposes other than pleasing. Certain aspects of these chapters (the discussion of tone, the description of characters undergoing emotions, amplification, pleasing through words, *copia* and brevity) extend the interests of Agricola's dialectic well into the realm of style and expression.

<sup>40</sup> *DID*, pp. 449-450: 'Ut ergo quae ad dispositionem pertinent, in summam quandam redigamus: opus est in primis, quisquis bene disponere volet, ut totam inventionis sue sylvam, hoc est, omnia quaecunque dicturus est, velut conspectui suo subiiciat. Tum quid in animo auditoris efficere velit, diligenter expendat. Deinde res ipsas, rerumque partes, et vim naturamque singularium, omniumque, et inter se conferat, et cum praeceptis omnia. Tum non difficulter videbit ubi temporum sequenda ratio, ubi per species res digerenda, et quibusdam velut limitibus singula discernenda, ubi aliud ex alio, ut quicque proximum aptissimumve fuerit, duendum. Tum quid tribuendum voluptati, quomodo victoriae certaminique serviendum, quis quaestionum ordo, quis argumentationum, quis propositionum servandus. Est autem diligenter multaque cura tractanda dispositio, quando veram haec pars ingenii laudem meretur. Sicut enim opes fortunae munere imprudentibus persaepe contingunt, recte autem administrare eas circumspecti consultique viri est proprium; sic inventionis copia indomit et insanis prope nonnunquam datur ingenii, decor dispositionis et ordo arte iudicioque formatur. Quorum ut illud naturae felicioris, sic hoc cultioris doctrinae signum est; optanda quidem utraque istud tamen iustius laudes.'

<sup>41</sup> See note 12 above

Agricola's account of disposition is not very well organised. He has not been able to produce a complete and systematic procedure from the fragments he inherited. He shows that there is a great variety of structures and orders open to the writer and that disposition involves making decisions at every level. He combines principles taken from rhetoric, dialectic and poetics. The three different types of order are literary. The different kinds of priority, the progress from better known to less well known, and the advice on disputation come from dialectic, while the advice on collecting the points together and beginning and ending with something strong comes from rhetoric.

Over and above these rather sparse and ill co-ordinated principles Agricola continually analyses examples taken from his reading or his thinking to show the variety and complexity of what can be done. Finally his summary shows how the significant pieces of information about material, context, speaker and audience have to be brought together in order to make good decisions about overall organisation and local order.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### THE USE OF DIALECTIC

Throughout *De inventione dialectica* Agricola claims that dialectic can improve people's use of language. He also endorses the age-old claim that dialectic provides the other subjects with their principles of organisation. In this chapter I shall consider how Agricola helps his readers apply the principles of dialectic, and what example his methods of teaching offer to other textbook writers. I shall begin by looking at the step by step methods by which Agricola teaches dialectical reading and the use of the topics. Then I shall consider how his worked examples offer practical instruction and help his readers see the connections between the different parts of his work. Finally I shall discuss his analyses of passages from classical literature, which both substantiate his claims about the use of dialectic in writing and exemplify the interpretative skills he aims to teach.

#### *Dialectical reading*

Agricola teaches dialectical reading in two stages. At first the student should concentrate on passages in which an argument is evidently being made. First it is necessary to discover the medium of the argument by finding the term which is present in the proposition(s) but not in the conclusion. Then the medium should be compared with the extreme terms, in order to discover the topical relationship between each of them and the medium. So in the argument 'The philosopher may not rightly dismiss his wife, therefore Cato may not rightly dismiss his wife', the medium is 'philosopher'. 'Philosopher' is compared with 'Cato'. By running down the list of topics with these two ideas in mind, we discover that 'philosopher' is an adjacent of 'Cato'. So this is an argument from adjacents. Agricola provides several other illustrations (354-356).

When the student has practised this with a number of clearly laid out arguments he or she will be able to do it in more difficult cases. What is much harder is to take a passage of text and reassemble the forms of argumentation which underlie it, so as to make them evident. To do this it is necessary to know the question to which the arguments are being applied. If this is not evident at first sight, the student will have to apply the

techniques for finding questions described previously. He or she needs to know, not just the general question which is the focus of the whole work, but the particular one being argued over at a given moment.

When the 'question has been found it can be applied to the proposition asserted in the text. If the latter proves the former, then we can construct an enthymeme with the question as the conclusion and the proposition found in the text as the proposition. If there are several propositions in the text, then if possible we must connect them as inferences, in order to produce a chain of enthymemes. If they cannot be connected together, then they must be treated either as several propositions making one argumentation or as proofs for several argumentations. The different possibilities are set out more fully in several examples.

Agricola connects the argument 'If you were a tribune, would you have done this? If you were a soldier, would you have put up with it?', from pseudo-Quintilian's declamation *Miles Marianus*, with the question at issue, 'Was the tribune justly killed by the soldier?'. The argument does not prove the chief question, but it establishes the two propositions which will prove it. The tribune should not have done as he did; the soldier was not obliged to put up with it. Two lines of argumentation have been brought together in a composite proposition.

From Seneca's *Hercules Furens*, Agricola considers an exchange between Lycus and Amphitryon.

AMP: Semperque magno constitut nasci deum.

LYC: Quemcumque miserum videris hominem scias.

AMP: Quemcumque fortem videris, miserum neges. (462-464)

Here we need to know that Lycus's intention is to deny that Hercules is a god. As it stands, his argument states only that he is human, but whoever is wretched is a man, whoever is a man is not a god. It is an argument from adjacents of Hercules and *diversa* of gods. Amphitryo's reply denies the assumption. No one strong is wretched. Hercules is strong, so he is not wretched.

One proposition proves a different one in an example from Lucan's *Pharsalia*, book 5.

While you were Caesar's soldiers you were the terror of the Iberians and the Gauls. If Pompey had been your leader you would have fled. Labienus was brave while he fought for Caesar, now he is a wretched deserter. With

his preferred leader he runs across lands and seas.<sup>1</sup>

The question here is identified as 'are the soldiers well advised to desert Caesar?' The proposition which we infer is: soldiers who were brave and famous under Caesar would be timid and given to flight if Pompey led them. When we compare this with the question, we can see how it proves the negative (358-360).

A line from *Pharsalia* book one ('Equal effort and fear may be obtained with greater reward')<sup>2</sup> is reconstructed as a syllogism:

Whatever may be obtained with less effort and greater reward is more desirable.

The civil war will require less effort than the Gallic war in return for a greater reward.

Therefore the civil war is more desirable.<sup>3</sup>

The process of dialectical reading is exemplified in a fuller and more finished form in Agricola's commentary on Cicero's *Pro lege Manilia*.<sup>4</sup> The commentary is in two parts. In the first half, as he says, Agricola carries out the duties of the *grammaticus* commenting on words, and explaining historical events and Roman institutions. In the second part he discusses the oration in terms of the precepts of dialectical invention and rhetoric.<sup>5</sup> Included in this are elementary explanations of the parts of an oration and their functions, and of the types of oration (464-465). Of much greater interest are the explanations of the groupings and tendencies of the main arguments. It is notable how closely Agricola follows his own precepts about always bearing the main question in mind and searching out the implied arguments in order to uncover the complete chains of reasoning, then referring the parts to the places of topical invention.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lucan, *De bello civile*, V, 343-347:

'Orbis Hiberi

Horror, et arctoi nostro sub nomine miles  
Pompeio certe fugeres duce. Fortis in armis  
Cesareis Labienus erat; nunc transfuga vilis,  
Cum duce praelato terras atque aequora lustrat.'

<sup>2</sup> Lucan, *De bello civile*, I, 284:

'Par labor atque metus, precio maiore petuntur'.

<sup>3</sup> *DID*, p. 360: 'Quaecunque minus laboris habent et plus praemii, magis sunt expetenda; bellum civile minus laboris habet quam Gallicum et plus praemii; civile ergo bellum magis est expetendum.'

<sup>4</sup> The commentary is printed at the end of Alardus's edition, *DID*, pp. 461-471.

<sup>5</sup> *DID*, pp. 461-464, p. 464: 'Defuncti itaque grammatici munere utcunque, reliquum esse videtur ut aggrediamur, id quod ad dialecticum attinere videtur, idque maxime iuxta inventionis dialecticae praecepta. Neque hoc prorsus alienum a rhetore esse videbitur.'

<sup>6</sup> After he has explained that this is a deliberative oration, and discussed its four parts,

Agricola explains the significance of Cicero's moves very fully. For example, from the sentence 'it involves the most certain and largest revenues of the Roman people' (*Pro Lege Manilia*, 2.6),<sup>7</sup> the circumstances of which Cicero examines more carefully at 6.14-16, Agricola derives the following sequence of reasoning.

'You must undertake and wage a war in which the greatest and most certain revenues of the Roman people are involved,...' By these words he proves the major proposition of the argument already stated, as if he said this: 'If the loss of some particular thing will cost you the ornaments of peace and the means of war, you must defend that thing with arms and with war. But if your revenues vanish, you will lose the ornaments of peace and the means of war; therefore you ought to defend your revenues with arms and war.' The argumentation is derived from the purpose of the revenues themselves. In Cicero the minor proposition is almost always put in place of the whole argumentation, which, as is often the case, proves the major proposition which he has not set out.<sup>8</sup>

Agricola sets out fully but briefly the pattern of argument implied by Cicero's reference, and bolstered by the other circumstances and possible consequences (including the possibility of a collapse of credit in Rome) which Cicero later draws in.<sup>9</sup> Agricola aims to select the links on which the whole structure of the argument turns, rather than follow all the supporting strands Cicero has amassed.

Agricola also usefully places segments of Cicero's reasoning in relation to the aims of the whole. He notices how Cicero establishes the importance of the war with arguments which will help him when he moves on to argue that Pompey ought to be chosen as general.

He gives one reason for the greatness of the war, with an argument derived

---

he sets out the principal question (Should Pompey be chosen for the war against Mithridates by the Roman people?) and the two subsidiary questions which he has chosen to discuss (Is the war necessary? Is the war so great and dangerous as to require Pompey?). *DID*, p. 465.

<sup>7</sup> *Pro lege Manilia*, 2.6: 'aguntur certissima populi Romani vectigalia et maxima quibus amissis et pacis ornamenta et subsidia belli requiretis.' This is part of Cicero's partition of the arguments, which in this speech is placed before the narration.

<sup>8</sup> *DID*, p. 466: 'In quoquaque bello aguntur maxima et certissima vectigalia Populi Romani id bellum vobis suscipiendum; Atqui in hoc bello aguntur maxima ac certissima populi Romani vectigalia; proinde hoc bellum vobis suscipiendum atque gerendum. His verbis probat maiorem propositionem iam dictae argumentationis, quasi hoc dicat: quaeacunque res sunt eiusmodi, ut eis amissis et ornamenta pacis et belli subsidia sitis requisituri, eae res vobis armis ac bello tutenda sunt. Atqui vectigalibus amissis ornamenta pacis et bella subsidia requiretis, proinde vectigalia vobis armis ac bello defendenda sunt. Argumentatio ducta ex fine ipsorum vectigalium. Apud Ciceronem fere semper minor propositio ponitur loco totius argumentationis, quod cum sit frequenter, probat maiorem, quam non explicavit.'

<sup>9</sup> *Pro Lege Manilia*, 7.19.

from efficient causes. 'That war which two great kings wage and which many warlike peoples undertake must be great and dangerous...' A twofold argument is needed so that what the speech proceeds to say is understood from these words of Cicero. He treats the first argument as established. It can be formed in this way: 'for a necessary and dangerous war the best general must be chosen; this war is both necessary and dangerous; for this reason the best general should be chosen for this war.' The other is: 'Precisely the man who is the best general must be put in charge of this war. But Pompey is the best general of our age; therefore Pompey alone must be put in charge of this war'.<sup>10</sup>

This analysis shows the arguments which are implicit but unstated in the transition Cicero makes between sections nine and ten. Although the unity of the speech depends on the link, Cicero is holding back the plain statement of the way the link works so that he can use it to conclude what he has to say about Pompey. When Cicero comes to the praise of Pompey's qualities, Agricola's attribution of the arguments to their topics is very revealing. Cicero is arguing about the kinds of virtue Pompey has.<sup>11</sup> He is hardworking, brave in danger, thorough in action, speedy in performance; then his personal virtues are enumerated. Pompey's innocence is best shown by a comparison with others and an argument from opposites. He does not sell offices, which other generals do.<sup>12</sup> His temperance is shown from contingents, by a form of argument which is reconstructed as: whoever is speediest in prosecuting a war, must of necessity have the greatest temperance, because, since the winds were no more favourable to him, he must have controlled the causes of delay.<sup>13</sup> His affability (*facilitas*) is argued from effects: he admits rich and poor alike to speak with him.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>10</sup> *DID*, p. 466: 'Magnitudinem belli una ratione ostendit ducta argumentatione a causis efficientibus. Quod enim bellum duo magni reges gerunt, quod multae ac bellicosae gentes suscipiunt, id magnum ac periculosest sit oportet...Duplici argumentatione est opus ut ex his Ciceronis verbis intelligatur id quo haec tendit oratio, quarum priorem velut notam iam accipit Cicero, potestque ea formari hoc modo: ad bellum necessarium ac periculosest diligendus est imperator optimus; hoc autem bellum, et necessarium et periculosest est; prouinde ad hoc bellum optimus imperator diligendus est. Altera est: is demum huic bello praeficiendus est, qui imperator sit optimus; atqui Pompeius optimus nostro hoc aevo est imperator; prouinde solus Pompeius huic bello praeficiendus est.'

<sup>11</sup> *Pro Lege Manilia*, 11.29-14.42.

<sup>12</sup> *DID*, p. 468: 'Ostendendum est in Pompeio summam inesse innocentiam quod commodissime se facturum putat Cicero; si cum aliis conferat, et si paulo intimius rem totam intueamur, argumentatio erit ducta ex oppositis.' *Pro Lege Manilia*, 13.37-8.

<sup>13</sup> *DID*, p. 468: 'Temperantiam in Pompeio esse ostendit ex contingentibus, nam celeritas illa belli conficiendi relata ad temperantiam contingens est, et indicium quoddam temperantiae...Quanquam si vim argumenti attendamus, ductum videbitur ex loco differentium...Confirmat idem ex remotione earum causarum, quae in reliquis imperatoribus inducere solent tarditatem.' *Pro Lege Manilia*, 14.40.

<sup>14</sup> *DID*, p. 468: 'Facilitatem in eodem Pompeio inesse ostendit ex proprio ipsius

Agricola comments at the end of the paragraph that it is the practice of orators when they seem to have strayed a long way to look back to the main matter at issue.<sup>15</sup>

Agricola's analysis here makes us aware of how much Cicero has made of very little, in arguing about Pompey's character. The advocate who could see his opponent straining for distant and diverse topics in this way would be well placed to refute him. Agricola develops a linear, structural analysis, to reduce the argument to its plan. With Cicero this can seem reductive of his density, of the kind of enrichment he obtains by piling on extra arguments, by repetitions and by appeals to every kind of interest. Agricola's claim is that once the structure is clear, the kinds and aims of the embellishment can be taken care of. With a text as dense as Cicero's, selection of detail is also interpretation. Sometimes his selection enables him to excavate arguments which are only implied, and this is when the analysis is most interesting; but it can also lead to changes of emphasis. For example, in considering the arguments for the magnitude of the war, Agricola relegates the honour/disgrace argument from first to fourth and comments that its force is more apparent than real.<sup>16</sup> If Cicero had thought this he would have demoted it too. Agricola is silent about Pompey's war with the pirates, but Cicero's many references to it indicate that he thought it important.<sup>17</sup>

On the whole though, these dialectical analyses are very powerful as ways into the text and for the close reading which stimulates them. We learn a good deal about Cicero's skills and his tricks, in a detail which is unusual. It is very different from other commentaries I have seen on the *Pro lege Manilia*. Agricola attends to details, like the transitional section, which other commentaries neglect. In a Paris edition of 1541, Agricola's commentary on *Pro lege Manilia* is printed alongside those of Sylvius, Omphalius, Latomus and Loschi. The other commentaries tend to be mostly grammatical, though Latomus follows Agricola in marking the

---

facilitatis effectu.' *Pro Lege Manilia*, 14.40.

<sup>15</sup> *DID*, p. 468: 'Mos est oratorum ut quanquam in praesentia aliud agant, hoc est, minus principalem aliquam quaestionem tractent, tamen subinde respectent ad causam principalem, id quod hoc loco diligenter observat Cicero. Nam ostendendum erat in Pompeio inesse omnes virtutes eas, quae in summo imperatore requirantur, quod quum satis probasset, deinde velut impetu quodam orationis huc delatus, addit id quod tota oratione docere instituit, nempe Pompeium huic bello praeficiendum esse.' *Pro Lege Manilia*, 14.42.

<sup>16</sup> *Pro Lege Manilia*, 5.11-6.14, *DID*, p. 466: 'Quarta argumentatio principalis: in quocunque bello gloria vobis querenda est et ignominia delenda id bellum omnino suscipere debetis... Habet haec argumentatio plus in specie quam re ipsa.'

<sup>17</sup> *Pro Lege Manilia*, 17.52-55.

divisions of the oration, while more significantly Omphalius follows him in explaining how the arguments of the oration fit together.<sup>18</sup> There may well have been other separate editions of the commentary.

The commentary on *Pro lege Manilia* can also be seen as the model for the dialectical analyses published by Ramus, his opponent Piscator, and their respective followers. As a style of reading it encourages the reader to see works as a whole and to understand the logical connections between different sections. It tends to privilege argumentative structure over other features of the work.

### *The Use of the Topics*

Agricola's instructions for dialectical reading form part of his sequence of exercises for developing students' skill in using the topics. Before students embark on dialectical reading it is essential that they read and reread book one, in order to acquire a detailed knowledge of the topics (355-356). Alongside dialectical reading students are also set to work on topical description.

Topical description involves taking an object and applying to it each of the topics in turn. It is enough to supply one or two keywords as an answer to each. So, if one were considering 'cat', one would aim to know its definition, genus, qualities and causes, to suggest an opposite, contingents and a comparison, and so on. This is helpful in obtaining familiarity with the list of topics and experience in the way particular topics may apply to different kinds of objects. It is also a useful way of taking stock of one's knowledge of a particular thing. At the same time the topical description may suggest other aspects worth investigating. It will often be necessary to turn to the particular sciences to find information indicated by particular topics. The object of the topics is to suggest arguments and lines of investigation. The habit of considering objects in this way increases the ability to light on fruitful arguments quickly (362-366). Among Agricola's examples of this process is the description of philosopher summarised at the beginning of chapter 7 above.

Once the students can do topical description they are introduced to the next exercise, which involves comparing two topical descriptions in order

---

<sup>18</sup> Ciceró, *Oratio pro lege Manilia*, R. Agricolae scholii, F. Sylvii, I. Omphalii commentarii, ac B. Latomi annotationibus et A. Luschi artificio illustrata (Paris, 1541), A8<sup>r</sup>-v, G3<sup>r</sup>, B3<sup>v</sup>, B6<sup>r</sup>, G3<sup>v</sup>. François Dubois (Sylvius) c. 1483-1536 assisted Badius on editions of the classics, *Contemporaries of Erasmus*, I (Toronto, 1985), pp. 407-408. Omphalius is discussed in chapter 13, Latomus in 13 and 14, and Loschi in chapter 1.

to discover the points of agreement and disagreement between them. The technique is illustrated with the example 'ought the philosopher to take a wife?'<sup>19</sup> Agricola applies topical description to 'philosopher' and 'wife'. He finds a connection between the definition of philosopher as someone concerned with virtue and the part of the definition of wife which involves bringing up children. He adds that there are definitions of woman which also involve honour and virtue. Descending into the different types of philosopher he thinks of different arguments to persuade Stoic and Epicurean philosophers to marry. If there are no points of connection or contradiction between the two lists, more remote mediums of argument can be sought by applying the topics to the contents of the lists (367-372).

The comparison of two topical descriptions is a dry run for topical invention, since the points of agreement or contradiction between the two descriptions can become the middle terms of syllogisms, in which the two subjects of the topical description are the outer terms. In practice once one has achieved familiarity with the topics it will be possible to pick on likely topics and investigate them, rather than having to run through all the topics in order.

Agricola provides similar step-by-step breakdowns of other techniques, such as the method of finding similitudes (143-146), the method of finding implied questions (247-250), the process of imitation,<sup>20</sup> and the preparation

---

<sup>19</sup> This question which is used as a running example in these chapters seems, like the related question about Cato passing Marcia on to Hortensius, to have been a subject for declamation. *Institutio oratoria*, 3.5.12-16, 10.5.13-14. S. F. Bonner, *Roman Declamation* (Liverpool, 1969), p. 8.

<sup>20</sup> The best method of practice is imitation: reading the works of the best authors and then trying to shape one's own writing after their model. The authors are the source of knowledge and matter, as well as models of invention, disposition and style. The reader should keep a store of arguments from them to hand. Different types of author must be compared in order to understand their differences and to know when to follow which.

To begin with, it will be enough for the student to handle the same questions as the authors he wishes to imitate. Later he will want to change the order of questions, argumentations and parts, and to add new arguments, or to vary the mixture of *copia* and brevity. Then he will be ready to approach similar questions, following as far as possible what he has learnt about the technique of invention and disposition in the example he has chosen. His analysis will lead him to observe differences and to set out on his own. For Agricola the foundations of this progress through imitation to improvement are a firm knowledge of the topics and an observant eye, ready to compare and contrast the implications of things, *DID*, p. 452. On imitation generally: G. W. Pigman III, 'Versions of Imitation in the Renaissance', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 33 (1980), pp. 1-32, 'Imitation and the Renaissance Sense of the Past: The Reception of Erasmus's *Ciceronianus*', *The Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 9 (1979), pp. 155-177, M. Fumaroli, *L'âge de l'éloquence* (Geneva, 1980), pp. 81-119, R. Sabbadini, *Storia del Ciceronianismo* (Turin, 1885).

of the commonplace book.<sup>21</sup> Evidently he regards it as part of the textbook writer's task to provide sequences of simple instructions. But he also understands the risk that in carrying out such sequences of instructions the student may lose sight of his or her main purpose: to persuade a given audience. Agricola attempts to avoid this danger by providing summaries of invention and disposition which stress the importance of intention, audience and structure. His summary of invention (375-377) draws the whole book together.

First it is necessary to formulate the main question. Then the class of questions to which it belongs must be determined so as to understand its nature. Next the question must be drawn out and broken down into subsidiary questions, and a judgement must be made about which questions it will be useful or necessary to discuss depending on the circumstances of the case. In the case of the philosopher taking a wife, for example, it will be necessary to decide whether or how much to consider broader questions, such as what the philosopher ought to seek in general and whether anyone should marry. Having decided which questions to tackle, one ought to look into what is implied in each. Topical invention must be applied to each of these things.

When we have done these things, and we have carefully looked into all the things we need to teach what we had intended, then we will easily see (and this relates to the structuring of the speech) whether the thing from which the question, which is to be explained through argumentation, arises, is simple or complex and involved. Simple things can be understood from a statement of the matter in question through the things which we have said are called propositions or in a similar way. Complex things, which arise

<sup>21</sup> In *De formando studio*, the commonplace book is one of the ways of keeping what you have read prepared for use in your writing. In a blank book a number of headings are entered at the tops of pages. When suitable phrases are come upon in reading, they are entered under the appropriate heading. Later if one has cause to think or speak about the thing named in the heading, the phrases entered will provide either a quotation which suits the point being made (if for example you are making a speech in a law case and happen to want to make an aside about a more general issue, wealth for example, or justice) or if you are considering the issue at more length they will provide a starting point. Agricola gives an example of a sentence which might be entered under several headings.

Agricola almost certainly learned the technique of the commonplace book from one of Guarino's followers (perhaps his son Battista) in Ferrara. Agricola's accounts were the primary means by which the technique was transmitted to northern Europe. Perhaps his other step by step methods also owe something to Guarino. Agricola counteracts the danger that such methods may become automatic and preempt more creative thought by limiting them and by reminding the student of all the factors which need to be borne in mind at the key moments of invention and disposition. *DID*, p. 453. *Lucubrationes* (Cologne, 1539), pp. 198-199, Guarino, *Epistolario*, ed. R. Sabbadini, 3 vols. (Venice 1916-1919), II, p. 270, R. R. Bolgar, *The Classical Heritage* (Cambridge, 1954), pp. 272-273.

from a tortuous or variable order of events, such as conditional questions and law cases, require an extended prefatory narration in order for them to be understood correctly.

Then we compare our character and the characters of the hearers with our opinion about the things we are about to speak of, and we consider what attention the hearers are likely to give to us, and what to our opponents, (if there are any speaking against us), as well as how the audience has attended to any previous speakers. When we have done this it will not be difficult to judge whether to prepare our approach to the minds of the audience with an *exordium* and who should be presented with misfortunes, who should be stirred up with hope, since we will have seen what it is on our side which most hinders us, or to which the audience is most favourable. In the same way with the peroration we must decide whether the events were so complex and our arguments so many that we need to refresh the memory of the audience with an enumeration: whether the state of affairs is such that we ought to complain of our condition in order to provoke tears: whether we should arouse anger, hatred or indignation in the minds of the audience. The condition of all things and all persons will correctly advise us, provided we consider them all together, as we said when we were talking about the parts of the oration.

Everything is to be drawn out of the same topics from which we have shown that arguments are drawn: whether we wish to teach or to arouse goodwill, anger, hatred, pity or any other emotion. All these things differ, as far as invention is concerned, only in the classes of questions. The strongest emotions are very often aroused by language which is more similar to exposition than to argumentation. Nevertheless they are often also aroused by argumentation, as we showed above. However (if you wish to arouse emotion) acuteness of reasoning and all that more intricate subtlety of arguing is to be avoided. To sum up, although the purity of a speech that teaches, and the vehemence of one which stirs up the audience with emotional effects do not differ in invention, yet they are different and almost at opposite extremes in style.<sup>22</sup>

---

<sup>22</sup> *DID*, pp. 376-377: 'Haec ubi fecerimus perviderimusque cuncta quibus sit nobis opus ad id quod instituimus docendum, tum facile videbimus quod ad formandam orationem pertinet, an res ea ex qua nascitur quaestio quae per argumentationem est explicanda, simplex sit, et quae solum proposita quaestione possit intelligi, quales sunt quas proposita diximus vocari, an sinuosa sit et multiplex, quaeque ex varia et flexuosa rerum oriatur serie, ut sunt conditionales quaestiones et civiles pleraque, ad quas recte percipiendas longior narratio praecedat oportet. Deinde cum nostram auditorumque personas et rerum de quibus simus dicturi conferimus aestimationem, et cogitamus quas aures nobis auditores, quas eis qui contra nos dicent, si qui dicent contra, sint adhibituri, quasque prius adhibuerint, si qui prius quam nos dixerint; tum non erit difficile iudicium nobis, an sit exordio parandus aditus ad animos eorum, et cui vel occurrentum incommodo, vel spei incumbendum, cum viderimus quid sit nostrarum partium, quo vel premamur maxime, vel cui faveatur. Sic et peroratione: an tam multiplex res tantaque fuerit argumentationum copia, ut sit auditoris memoria enumeratione reficienda; an ea sit natura rerum, ut queri de nostra conditione, moveare lachrymas, ira, odio, indignatione miscere auditorum animos debeamus. Omnia nos rerum personarumque conditio rectissime admonebit, si cuncta consideremus quemadmodum diximus, cum loqueremur de his partibus orationis. Omnia ex eisdem ducenda locis erunt, ex quibus argumentationes ostendimus duci, sive doceamus, sive benevolentiam, iram, odium,

This summary emphasizes the range of material which must be brought together in deciding on the form and content of the piece. The topics are the source of all the expository, argumentative and emotional material. While the summary seeks to avoid giving primacy to the forensic speech (as classical accounts invariably do), it nevertheless falls back into the assumption that the four-part oration is the typical structure.

### *Worked Examples*

*De inventione dialectica* contains a number of worked examples, that is, examples which are analysed or worked through in order to demonstrate a particular doctrine in action. Such examples had been rare in dialectic books (unless one includes the examples of the forms of the syllogism) and were not very common in rhetorics.<sup>23</sup> Their main function, evidently, is illustration—thus ‘whether the philosopher should take a wife’ helps the reader to understand what is meant by comparing topical descriptions; ‘did Cato correctly pass Marcia on to Hortensius?’ illustrates the method of deriving many questions; and the examples of the arguments of the different philosophers show how the disposition of an argument alters with the speaker’s point of view.<sup>24</sup> These examples also introduce variety and even a certain amount of humour. Such worked examples are the staples of modern textbooks, but Agricola’s frequent use of them marks him out among his contemporaries.

Some of Agricola’s worked examples also help in unifying his book. In book two, chapter ten, he uses the contrast between the general question, ‘can anyone rightly dismiss his wife?’, and the actual case ‘did Cato rightly dismiss Marcia?’, with all its attendant complexities of belief and personality, to illustrate the difference between a general question (categorical) and a particular controversy (hypothetical). In chapter fourteen, as we have seen, the same example is used to illustrate the way many questions can be derived from the implications of a particular one. In chapter twenty-six, two arguments which might be used in this question are taken apart to reveal the topics from which they derive. The question found

---

misericordiam, aliosve moveamus affectus; solisque cuncta haec quaestionum capitibus, quod inventionis est, distant. Validissimi autem affectus persaepe oratione, quae expositioni quam argumentationi similior est, moventur; saepe tamen et argumentatione, ut alio docuimus loco. Colligendi tamen acumen omnisque tenuior illa argumentandi subtilitas vitanda est. Utque semel dicam, puritas illa docentis orationis, et impetus affectibus turbantis, sicut inventio nihil distant, ita eloquendi prope extremis sunt finibus discreta.’ Compare the summary of disposition (449-450) discussed in the previous chapter.

<sup>23</sup> A good example from Quintilian is *Institutio oratoria*, 7.1.41-63.

<sup>24</sup> *DID*, pp. 368-372, 247-250, 428-429.

to be prior, ‘whether the philosopher should marry?’, is used again in chapters twenty-nine and thirty.<sup>25</sup>

In another example, a Stoic is seen constructing an argument to prove that the wise man must be wealthy. If the wise man thinks that virtue alone is good, he does not think wealth is good, therefore he does not want it. In that case he has as much as he wants, and he lacks nothing, therefore he is rich. The next chapter, on refuting arguments, explains that either the premiss or the form of argument must be rejected. If this fails, one must investigate the words. Picking up the same example, the word ‘lack’ is said to have been used ambiguously; in one phrase it is equivalent to ‘is not present’ (if nothing is not present, he must be rich) in the other to ‘is desired’ (if nothing is desired, he must be good).<sup>26</sup>

One of the worked examples Agricola presents is on the same theme as one Quintilian had discussed. When Alexander conquered Thebes, he gave to his allies, the Thessalians, documents which recorded a debt of one hundred talents which Thessaly owed to Thebes. When the city was restored, the Thebans demanded payment of the debt.

Quintilian begins his analysis of the case by securing the facts. The loan is admitted, and it was not repaid. So the whole dispute turns on whether Alexander’s gift was equivalent to the gift of the money. The places of argument are no help unless the arguer first appreciates that he must attack the power of Alexander to give this. In the opening the Thebans’ advocate will try to recover, through law, what force had taken. But the Thessalians will argue about the rights of war, since kingdoms and borders rest on it. So the Thebans’ problem is to show how this instance differs from those. This leads to three lines of argument: that when judgement is brought in, the rights of war can only be maintained by illegal force; that the conqueror can dispense goods but not rights; and that the right to payment is independent of the documents. Quintilian uses the example to show that the topics themselves are not enough and that many points depend on the circumstances of the case. He backs up several of his points with arguments derived from the tribunal involved, the Amphictyonic council.<sup>27</sup>

Agricola uses the example to show that not all parts of a case supply equally forceful arguments, and that this unevenness makes it important to

---

<sup>25</sup> *DID*, pp. 235, 247-250, 355-356, 368-372, 375-376. The example about Cato and Marcia is mentioned by Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, 3.5.11, 10.5.13 (on both occasions alongside the case of Milo which Agricola often discusses).

<sup>26</sup> *DID*, pp. 284, 285-286, 290-291.

<sup>27</sup> *Institutio oratoria*, 5.10.111-118.

look into all parts. He considers the Thessalian side. On their own account they can only insist that the gift of the documents was the gift of the debt. But they are led to other topics of discussion by considering what may be said against them: to discuss the position of the documents, to consider whether rights can be given, both in general and in the particular case. These are the same as Quintilian's second and third points. This leads him, as it had Quintilian, to the question of the completeness of the restoration. The Roman's phrasing implies that this argument supports the Thebans.

The Thebans seem to have regained the right, even if they grant that they had lost it, by restoration.<sup>28</sup>

Agricola puts it differently:

Must a restoration be considered as if nothing of all that preceded it had happened?<sup>29</sup>

It may be argued at least that it does not. Agricola's main point is that we find other important things we should say (even if by way of defence) by considering the other side; but he concludes that the Thessalians also find, in the middle of strong considerations against them, a good argument on which to base a new defence (250-251). It is clear that Agricola's treatment adapts Quintilian to make his own point and to suggest his ability to go beyond his model.

This declamation theme attracted other Renaissance authors. George of Trebizond treated it in *Rheticorum libri V*, giving several arguments on both sides, and Erasmus considered the key points briefly in *De copia*.<sup>30</sup> Like Agricola, George and Erasmus both depend quite heavily on Quintilian's arguments, but there are no shared arguments or replies to specific points to suggest that Agricola had George's version in mind, or that Erasmus was consciously working from either of theirs.

### *Literary Examples*

As in life as a whole, so also in this method of invention, the first thing is to know what ought to be done and by what means. We will easily succeed in doing what is right, and to the right degree, by imitation. Generally the

<sup>28</sup> *Institutio oratoria*, 5.10.118: 'restitutione recepisse ius, etiamsi quod amiserint, Thebani videntur.'

<sup>29</sup> *DID*; p. 251: 'an sit perinde habenda restitutio, ac si nihil esset actum omnibus his, quae praecesserunt eam.'

<sup>30</sup> *Rheticorum libri V* (Venice, 1523), ff. 41a-b, Erasmus, *Opera omnia* (Leiden, 1703), I, cols. 85-86. It is also mentioned by Budé, *Annotationes in Pandectas*, 1.9, *Opera omnia*, 4 vols. (Basel, 1537), III, 102C-D.

ears are trained with precepts: examples teach the eyes. Although there may be more things which we can learn by hearing than by seeing, and the sense of hearing may be open wider, yet the things which we commit ourselves to believing with our eyes are more certain. From this comes the saying in Plautus: one eyewitness is better than ten ear witnesses. The ears believe others; the eyes believe themselves.<sup>31</sup>

Agricola provides examples within his book and also directs his students to examine their own reading. Since the authors have often hidden their art carefully Agricola provides detailed comments to help students understand how the precepts are applied in the texts being read.<sup>32</sup>

Agricola was well aware that his literary examples formed a crucial part of his dialectic book. In his letter to Occo, he claimed to be in a quandary about his presumed audience. Those unequipped to read literature would not derive much benefit from it because of the large number of examples taken from learned authors, whereas few who are so qualified would read textbooks or would think there was anything to be added to Aristotle, Cicero and Quintilian.<sup>33</sup> The way the parallel is made suggests that the examples were almost as important as the precepts.

In the final chapter of the book Agricola connects his presentation and analysis of examples with the need for practice in order to master any art. Practice makes clear and open things which at first seem difficult and obscure. To assist in this he has written much more than textbook writers usually do, and he has loaded the text with examples to make things as clear and open as possible. His examples are presented as a sort of bridge to further reading and imitation, through which means the theory will become part of the student's practice of writing (452-453).

Agricola's examples are prominent not merely because of their number but because (apart from the cases where several brief references are used to illustrate a point or a division)<sup>34</sup> he devotes so much attention to analysing the effects of each, and because at times he expects them to bear an important part of his argument. Within the dialectic book all Agricola's

<sup>31</sup> *DID*, pp. 354-355: 'Sicut enim in omni vita, sic in hac quoque inveniendi ratione, primum est scire quid sit faciendum et quo pacto. Facere vero quae recta sunt et quatenus recta sunt imitatione facilime consequimur. Praeceptis enim aures fere imbuuntur, exempla docent oculos. Quanquam sint autem plura, quae audiendo possumus, quam videndo discere, latiusque aurium pateat sensus; certiora sunt tamen quorum ipsi nobis oculis tradimus fidem. Unde scite apud Comicum dictum est: pluris est oculatus testis unus quam auriti decem. Aures enim aliis, oculi sibi credunt.' Plautus, *Truculentus*, 489.

<sup>32</sup> *DID*, p. 355: 'Viam igitur quandam ad ista, et (ut dicitur) manuductionem fortasse dare poterimus, quo facilius in his loci cognoscantur.'

<sup>33</sup> *DID*, b1<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>34</sup> E.g. *DID*, pp. 146, 292, 406-407.

examples serve the purpose of showing a particular technique in action or of confirming the truth of a particular observation. This is the way examples function in textbooks. I have argued elsewhere that some of Agricola's discussions of literary examples go beyond this, making observations which arise more from consideration of the text than from the needs of his teaching. In that sense they tell us about his reading of texts as well as how he used them for teaching dialectic. There are ways in which Agricola's approach to his analysis of literary examples marks a considerable advance on his classical and early Renaissance predecessors.<sup>35</sup>

Using so many literary examples also reinforces his position on the need for teaching and argument to be conducted in real language, rather than in some sort of semiformalised dialect. It also underlines the emphasis Agricola continually places on reading and rereading the best authors. In his discussion of dialectical reading he warns that only someone who has read the authors long and closely will always be able to disentangle the arguments from the dense texture of the expression. In the same way, one of the reasons suggested for doing dialectical reading is that it will help us understand the strengths of the authors. By seeing how they include and combine arguments the reader's judgement will be improved.<sup>36</sup>

The examples which Agricola discusses come mainly from the most read authors: Virgil, Cicero, Terence and Lucan. Some of the passages he chooses (particularly from Cicero) are among those which had elicited most comment from the rhetoricians.<sup>37</sup> Thus for example he follows Quintilian in giving a great deal of attention to *Pro Milone*, *Pro lege Manilia* and *Pro Cuentio*. The unexpected addition to the group of most quoted works is the *Declamations* of pseudo-Quintilian. The reason that Agricola made such extensive use of these was that, like most of his contemporaries, he believed them to represent the practice of Quintilian, his preferred authority on rhetoric. Although poetry and oratory are the main sources for Agricola's examples, he also makes comparisons with painting, music, astronomy and mathematics.<sup>38</sup>

In the article referred to above I argued for a degree of originality in Agricola's reading of texts in comparison with analyses by Quintilian, Loschi and George of Trebizond. I suggested that this may be a

---

<sup>35</sup> *JWCI*, 48 (1985), pp. 23-41.

<sup>36</sup> *DID*, pp. 452-454, 354-355.

<sup>37</sup> Thus, for example, a large number of his *Aeneid* quotations come from books one, two and four (though there are also some from book ten, mentioned in chapter nine above).

<sup>38</sup> *DID*, pp. 303, 397, 451-452, 259, 265-266, 238.

consequence of his commitment to reading literature, his firm grasp of logical structure, and his good knowledge of Quintilian. His analyses of texts seem to me both an important feature of the work, and impressive in themselves as indicators of Agricola's literary culture.

What marks them out, first, is the closeness of the reading. Agricola is able to point out the effects of details within a passage while remaining aware of their larger context. The second strong feature is his awareness of logical connections. This is the basis of his technique of dialectical reading. Thirdly he seems very interested in what the poet or character seems to be aiming for, and how the words used bring about a particular effect on the audience. This often leads him into illuminating discussion of the effect of certain figures of speech. A fourth characteristic is his awareness of texture. This is the main feature of his distinctions between exposition and argumentation, and between *copia* and brevity. It underlies his discussion of amplification and his use of the term *color*.

There is also a creativity in his borrowing. He adds to the ideas he takes over. Out of the common observation that truth and fiction are linked in Sinon's speech, he builds the idea that Sinon has scattered throughout his speech a series of propositions, which the hearers will construct into arguments. Thus the hearers will be deceived by their own processes of reasoning. A commonplace about imitation leads him to original remarks about poetry and to interesting observations about the organisation of *Aeneid* 1 and Virgil's aims.<sup>39</sup> This ability to create out of what he has borrowed reflects his remarks to Jacques Barbiriau on what justifies literary studies.

What I have placed last is how out of the things which we have perceived in learning, we ourselves are able to compose and put forward something, so that our studies do not lie in our minds, sluggish, and, so to speak, sterile, but which, as seeds planted in the earth are accustomed to do, produce with advantage more abundant fruit....if we ourselves could hand nothing on to our successors, put forward to our contemporaries nothing beyond what we have learned, what would be the difference between us and a book?<sup>40</sup>

---

<sup>39</sup> *DID*, pp. 397, 401-402. Quoted in chapter 9 above.

<sup>40</sup> *Lucubraciones*, p. 198: 'Quod proposueram postremum, quo pacto ex iis quae discendo percepimus, ipsi excudere aliquid proferreque valeamus, neve studia nostra apud animum segnia, et (ut ita dicam) sterilia reponantur, sed quod semina solent in terra condita, fructum aliquem uberiorem cum foenore profundant...quod si nihil ipsi ad posteros mandare poterimus, nihil extra ea quae didicimus ad praesentes proferre, quid tandem inter librum et nos intererit?'

Agricola's handling of his literary examples is one of the outstanding and original features of *De inventione dialectica*. His work with texts gives us some idea of what his individual teaching was like. This in turn may help explain the great impression that he made on his acquaintances.<sup>41</sup>

---

<sup>41</sup> It may also have been what most impressed Ramus. K. Meerhoff, 'Agricola et Ramus - dialectique et rhétorique', in F. Akkerman ed., *Rodolphus Agricola Phrisius*, pp. 270-280, (pp. 270-272).

## CHAPTER TWELVE

### *DE INVENTIONE DIALECTICA IN THE TRADITIONS OF RHETORIC AND DIALECTIC*

*De inventione dialectica* is an original and unified work which teaches much of the essential material of rhetoric and dialectic in a way that is reflective as well as practical. Within the traditions of both subjects it challenges comparison with the best works of antiquity: Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and *Topica*, Cicero's *Topica* and Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria*.<sup>1</sup> In its flexibility, its orientation to real language, and its combining of the two subjects, it can claim to inaugurate a new tradition. This makes it one of the earliest works of which one can truthfully say that the Renaissance has gone beyond antiquity rather than achieved a passable understanding or a plausible imitation of it.

In this chapter I shall attempt to place *De inventione dialectica* in relation to the traditions of rhetoric and to estimate its contribution to both subjects, but I need to begin by considering the issue of the indebtedness of Agricola's work to Lorenzo Valla's *Repastinatio dialecticae et philosophiae*.

#### *De inventione dialectica and Lorenzo Valla*

The currently accepted view is that there is a close connection between *De inventione dialectica* and Valla's *Repastinatio*. Vasoli speaks of Agricola's evident knowledge of Valla and the influence of Valla's anti-metaphysical approach on the logico-rhetorical method of the *De inventione dialectica*. Lisa Jardine calls this work the fruit of Agricola's Italian experiences and in particular of his reading of Valla's *Dialecticae disputationes*, and terms it 'a program of dialectical study embodying an intellectual position drawn from Valla'.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> *De inventione dialectica* is not sufficiently concerned with the philosophy of rhetoric or with formal logic and methodology for it to be compared with *De oratore* or the *Analytics* respectively.

<sup>2</sup> C. Vasoli, *La dialettica e la retorica dell'Umanesimo* (Milan, 1967), p. 157. L. Jardine, 'Lorenzo Valla and the Intellectual Origins of Humanist Dialectic', *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 15 (1977), pp. 143-164 (p. 146). In this article the connection is

There are some clear links between the two works. However, since they are not so overwhelming as these quotations might suggest, and since there are also many dissimilarities and contradictions, it seems important to set out the differences between them. The most important thing they share is the aim of reuniting logic and real language.

Valla's name never appears in *De inventione dialectica*. It is, however, certain that Agricola had read *Repastinatio dialecticae et philosophiae*. In a letter of September 1480 to Alexander Hegius, Agricola objects to a complaint which Valla had made about the words *Socratitas*, *Platonitas* and *entitas*.<sup>3</sup> In *De inventione dialectica*, he makes the same complaint, omitting Valla's name but adding a reference to *quiditas* (which Valla had also rejected) which Agricola defends because it expresses a concept for which there is no classical Latin word.<sup>4</sup> In both places Agricola cites words of the same formation (*Appietas*, *Lentulitas*, *Patavinitas*) which Cicero and Asinius Pollio had used. In his second and third recensions, Valla had referred to Cicero's use of the first two of these words and had argued that they were not exceptions to his rule, since they were nouns ending in *-itas* based on adjectives.<sup>5</sup> That Agricola should use these examples suggests either that he read the first version of Valla's work or that he did not have the text before him as he wrote, and remembered the general point but not the details. In any event since the letter naming Valla is dated only a year after the completion of *De inventione dialectica*, and since there is a detailed point of contact, we can assume that Agricola had read *Repastinatio* before writing *De inventione dialectica*.

There are a few other places where a detail of Agricola's teaching appears to copy a new doctrine of Valla's. The most significant appears in the topics. Three of Agricola's new topics, those which he calls 'around the substance': adjacents, action and subject, parallel Valla's three categories: quality, action and substance. The connection is confirmed by some details of the presentation: Adjacent comprehends the objects of the individual senses and of the combination of them. It includes magnitude, multitude, shape, the subjects of human knowledge and the virtues. Actions originate

---

treated as so close that one text can be used to gloss the other. This orthodoxy has now been challenged by J. Monfasani, 'Lorenzo Valla and Rudolph Agricola', *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 28 (1990) pp. 181-199. I first made many of the points in this chapter in my 1983 PhD Thesis, pp. 160-167.

<sup>3</sup> *Lucubrationes*, p. 190.

<sup>4</sup> *DID*, p. 228.

<sup>5</sup> Valla, *Opera omnia* (Basel, 1540), pp. 652-653, *Repastinatio*, pp. 30-36. Cf. pp. 371-373 (first version).

in adjacents. Subject is what lies beneath something else. All these positions correspond with Valla's.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, Agricola's list of the qualities of touch echoes the one Valla gives in the first version of *Repastinatio dialecticae et philosophiae*.<sup>7</sup>

This is not to say that Agricola accepted Valla's version of the categories. Valla's claim that everything is comprehended by these three categories is very different from Agricola's placing them among many other topics, including several of Aristotle's categories. Equally there are elements in Agricola's three topics which come from other sources (the division of adjacents into native and accidental, and the discussion of the purposes of actions).<sup>8</sup> It is significant that all three are placed 'outside the substance', whereas for Valla something equivalent to Agricola's subject takes the role of substance. There are also elements (the definition of adjacent as 'a non-existent mode of a thing, by which something is called other than according to the name of its substance', and the willingness to entertain a category of quantity)<sup>9</sup> with which Valla would have disagreed violently. This is a case of Agricola using Valla's doctrines in a way which suits his own purposes.

A third possible point of contact involves the question 'what is a man?' Valla stated clearly and scornfully that 'animal' is not an adequate answer to this question.<sup>10</sup> While discussing definition Agricola said that 'animal' is an acceptable answer. In this he was following Boethius translating Porphyry.<sup>11</sup> Later (229) while discussing the different types of question, Agricola states that the genus is only a partial answer to a question in *quid*. 'What is a man?' can be answered 'animal', but it is not answered fully

<sup>6</sup> *DID*, pp. 62-76, *Repastinatio*, pp. 363-366. See chapter 3 above.

<sup>7</sup> *DID*, p. 62: 'tactus: calidum, frigidum, humidum, siccum, durum, molle, asperum, lene, et reliqua quae tactu percipiuntur', *RDP*, p. 435: 'Tactus qualitates sunt molle, durum, lene, asperum, calidum, frigidum, humidum, siccum, densus, rarum, spissum, tenue.' If this parallel is accepted, it suggests that Agricola must have used the first version of *RDP*. The first version probably was sent by Valla to Guarino in Ferrara, and it was the version which circulated most widely in manuscript. J. Monfasani, review of *RDP* in *Rivista di letteratura Italiana*, 2 (1984), pp. 177-194 (181-184, 189).

<sup>8</sup> *DID*, pp. 63-71.

<sup>9</sup> *DID*, p. 62: 'Adiacens vocamus modum rei inexistentem, quo aliquid aliud quam secundum substantiae suea denominationem vocatur.' Compare *Repastinatio*, pp. 21-30, 373-377. *DID*, p. 76: 'Magnitudo autem, quam inter adjacentia numeravimus, si substantiae comparetur, adjacentibus accedit; sin reliquis conferatur adjacentibus, subiecti habet vicem, non quidem ut in ipsa sint adjacentia, sed quod nequeant nisi illius interventu ea praesertim quae corpori adjacent, in substantia reponi.' Compare *Repastinatio*, pp. 134, 141-147, 425-430.

<sup>10</sup> *Repastinatio*, pp. 164-169, 393-398.

<sup>11</sup> *DID*, p. 26, *PL* 64, 95B, 127A.

until a *differentia* is added. Phrissemius notices the discrepancy in his views, but Agricola does not.<sup>12</sup>

Since this passage occurs within a page of the discussion of *quiditas*, in which he disagreed with Valla without mentioning his name, it is possible that Agricola is here knowingly following Valla. He might also, however, have reached the same conclusion independently, since it was commonly accepted doctrine that a definition required a *differentia* as well as a genus.

It is just possible that a remark Agricola makes about the Latin translation of οὐσία may be derived from Valla's discussion of this subject.<sup>13</sup> Agricola says that whereas the more natural translation for οὐσία would be *essentia*, custom dictates that *substantia* is the normal translation. Valla made the same point but he was not alone in doing so. This connection, however, disappears if one accepts the hypothesis that Agricola used the first version of the *Repastinatio*.<sup>14</sup>

There are some similarities between some of the basic definitions (e.g. of dialectic, topics, argument, argumentation) employed by both authors, but in all these cases the similarity seems to derive from common sources (respectively Cicero and Boethius; Cicero and Quintilian; Cicero; Peter of Spain) to which both are more similar than they are to each other.<sup>15</sup>

These possible connections of detail are few and not very significant. They are considerably outweighed by the disagreements listed below. They

<sup>12</sup> *DID*, p. 229. Phrissemius (1528), pp. 27-28, 196.

<sup>13</sup> *DID*, p. 76, *Repastinatio*, pp. 41-46; Seneca, *Epistolae*, 58.6-8.

<sup>14</sup> At the end of the topic of action, while commenting that action and adjacents are particularly useful topics for discussing points of scientific knowledge, Agricola states that there are some aspects of natural philosophy which are unknown to us, or of which we can say more easily what is not true than what is. It is possible that this passage could be connected with Valla's attack on those who make statements about aspects of the universe such as the supracelestial world, of which they can have no direct knowledge. I think this parallel rather remote. *DID*, p. 72, *Repastinatio*, p. 98.

<sup>15</sup> Dialectic: 'disputatricem scientiam', *Repastinatio*, p. 527, 'scientia sermocinans', p. 278n, 'diligens ratio disserendi', *Topica*, 2.6, *Repastinatio*, p. 278, 'ars probabiliter de qualibet re proposita disserendi, prout cuiusque natura capax esse fidei poterit', *DID*, p. 193, 'ratio disserendi', *PL* 64, 1173B, 1045A-C.

Topic: 'sedes argumentorum, in quibus latent, ex quibus sunt petenda', *Institutio oratoria*, 5.10.20, *Repastinatio*, p. 254, *Topica*, 2.8, 'communis quaedam rei nota, cuius admonitu, quid in quaeque re probable sit, potest inveniri', *DID*, p. 9.

Argument: 'probabile inventum ad faciendam fidem', *Partitiones oratoriae*, 2.5, *Repastinatio*, p. 279, 'ratio quae rei dubiae faciat fidem', *Topica*, 2.8, *PL* 64, 1048B, 1174C, *Repastinatio*, p. 279, *DID*, p. 2. Agricola later (p. 8) identifies the argument with the middle term, which Valla rejects, *Repastinatio*, pp. 527, 279.

Argumentation: 'elocutio argumenti', *PL* 64, 1174C, *Repastinatio*, p. 280, 'orationem, qua quis rei de qua dicit, fidem facere conatur', *DID*, p. 2. 'argumenti per orationem, explicatio, id est oratio explicans argumentum', *Tractatus*, p. 55.

certainly do not suggest that Agricola went out of his way to endorse Valla's opinions.

Agricola may well have known *Elegantiae*. Gilbert Tournoy has noticed that while he was making improvements in successive versions of his *Axiochus* translation, Agricola corrected his use of the reflexive pronoun, often replacing reflexives with demonstratives. Tournoy suggested that this was a consequence of reading Valla.<sup>16</sup> Ari Wesseling has discussed Agricola's explanations of certain Latin words in his letter to Hegius of 20 September 1480. For Wesseling Agricola's remarks suggest that he had not read the chapters of *Elegantiae* in which some of these words are discussed.<sup>17</sup> In 1539 Alardus of Amsterdam pointed out a parallel between Agricola's remark on the tendency of historians to copy each other and a similar comment in *Elegantiae*.<sup>18</sup> Some historians find that Valla and Agricola are linked because they are both Academic sceptics. In my view neither of them is a sceptic in more than the weakest sense of that term. What they say on this subject does not show any similarity of detail.<sup>19</sup>

The second important point that needs to be borne in mind is that the two works are quite different in scope. Agricola is not directly concerned to discuss any of the matters which preoccupy Valla in his first book, the most revolutionary of the three. Agricola's discussions of the proposition and the forms of argumentation are both brief. A large proportion of the area of overlap between *Repastinatio* and *De inventione dialectica* occurs in the chapters which Valla borrows from Quintilian. This fact can be used to explain the paucity of direct links between Valla and Agricola, but it also indicates the difference between the two works.

There are quite a number of points on which Agricola states a view which is different from or contrary to Valla's. Several of these, which I list for the sake of brevity, are remarks made in passing.

1. In the topic of definition, Agricola follows Cicero's definition where Valla had preferred Quintilian's. *DID*, p. 26, *RDP*, pp. 168, 400.<sup>20</sup>
2. In the definition of property, he accepts Porphyry's fourth definition,

---

<sup>16</sup> G. Tournoy, 'Marcel Ficin, Agricola et leurs traductions de l' *Axiochus*', in F. Akkerman and A. J. Vanderjagt eds., *Rodolphus Agricola Phrisius* (Leiden, 1988), pp. 211-218 (215-216). Valla discusses the reflexive pronouns in *De reciprocatione sui et suus*, usually found after *Elegantiae*. It is possible that Agricola could have had access to the former work separately.

<sup>17</sup> A. Wesseling, 'Agricola and word explanation', *ibid.*, pp. 229-235 (233-235).

<sup>18</sup> *DID*, pp. 297, 300-301, *Elegantiae*, 6.54.

<sup>19</sup> See chapters 4 and 8 above.

<sup>20</sup> Numbers in excess of 357 refer to the first version.

where Valla had also (in order to praise Quintilian) accepted the second. *DID*, p. 50, *RDP*, pp. 170-172, 398-400.

3. He accepts Aristotle's view of the relationship between form and matter. *DID*, pp. 53-54, *RDP*, pp. 110-112, 381-383.
4. He agrees with the Aristotelian tradition that a substance must have quantity before it can have quality. *DID*, p. 76.<sup>21</sup>
5. He supports Aristotle's view of sense-perception as passive. *DID*, pp. 75-76, *RDP*, pp. 154-156, 445-446.
6. In his discussion of action he uses the word *ἐνελέχεια*, which Valla had rejected. *DID*, p. 72, *RDP*, p. 130.
7. He admits place, time and *connexa* as topics, although Valla had reduced these categories to quality and action. His discussion shows no awareness of Valla's critique. *DID*, pp. 92-104, *RDP*, pp. 134-135, 137-143, 438-442. [Together with point 4, this probably indicates that Agricola accepts Aristotle's account of the categories.]
8. He uses a definition of time which Valla had rejected. *DID*, p. 98, *RDP*, pp. 150-152, 438-440.
9. He sets out the traditional four kinds of opposition, which Valla had reduced to one kind. *DID*, pp. 154-156, *RDP*, pp. 235-236, 497-499.
10. He accepts Aristotle's account of subcontraries, which Valla had rejected. *DID*, p. 156, *RDP*, pp. 227-231, 481-485.
11. He accepts Aristotle's four kinds of modal proposition, which Valla had reduced to two. *DID*, p. 234, *RDP*, pp. 237-243, 491-496.
12. He accepts Aristotle's account of induction. *DID*, pp. 266-267, *RDP*, pp. 345-347, 587-592.
13. He accepts the Aristotelian arrangement of four forms of proof. *DID*, pp. 266-268, *RDP*, pp. 334-355, 578-596.
14. He does not refer to any forms of argumentation beyond these four.<sup>22</sup>
15. He distinguished quality as status from quality as category. *DID*, p. 229, *RDP*, pp. 9-10.

Taking all these points together it would appear that Agricola accepted the basis of Aristotelian metaphysics and that his treatise on judgement, if he had written one, would have been far more Aristotelian than Valla's. It is significant that Agricola did not include any direct discussion of the predicables and the categories, as a traditional dialectic manual would have done. It is fair to see a parallel between Valla's arguments against

---

<sup>21</sup> See note 9 above.

<sup>22</sup> Valla teaches many other kinds, see chapter 4 above.

metaphysics and Agricola's omission of the metaphysical part of dialectic, but his passing remarks show that Agricola follows Aristotle in metaphysics in spite of having read Valla.

*Repastinatio dialecticae et philosophiae* is different from *De inventione dialectica* both in scope and in approach. Valla's work is largely controversial. Although he wishes to simplify metaphysics to the point where it reflects and supports real language, his method of achieving this is philosophical. He attacks the Aristotelian system wherever he can and he builds a system of his own to replace it. Real language is one of the chief criteria of his criticism but he cannot be said to have produced a simplified dialectic adapted to the needs of everyday language.

By contrast Agricola's work is instructional and practical, continually involved with real language and with literature. He places more emphasis on reading and he reads texts more in their own terms. He never seems to have endorsed the ideal of the orator as Valla did. For him dialectic was the central part of the arts of language, and both rhetoric and dialectic were propaedeutic to higher studies, notably philosophy, culminating in sacred letters. Dwelling on the difference of scope and approach emphasizes the independence and originality of much of what Agricola was doing.

These differences can also be used to make a very general connection between them. Valla aimed to make logic simpler and closer to ordinary language. Through the organisation of his book and through his use of Quintilian, he had signalled new attention to invention and the topics. Agricola actually wrote a real-language based logic centred on a new, more detailed version of the topics. He explained their use and their place in practical and literary discourse clearly and intelligently. So one might say that while Valla announced the programme of a real-language based logic Agricola completed his work by producing a practical account of dialectical invention.

But this attractive hypothesis neglects the likelihood that Agricola could have taken over the project of a language-based logic from someone other than Valla, from George of Trebizond perhaps. I have noted that George's dialectic, composed before Valla's, was much used alongside Agricola in the sixteenth century.<sup>23</sup> Some of Valla's ideas may have stimulated Agricola, but the approach and most of the content of *De inventione dialectica* belong to Agricola himself.

---

<sup>23</sup> In 'Humanists and Dialectic', part of chapter 1 above.

*De inventione dialectica and the trivium*

The key to understanding the relation of *De inventione dialectica* to rhetoric and dialectic lies in Agricola's repeated consideration of the arts of language as a group. When he attempts to explain the role of dialectic he usually begins by listing the functions of language (i.e. teaching, moving and pleasing), which he appropriates from the rhetorical tradition of the *officia oratoris*, or its virtues (correctness, convincingness and elegance) and assigning them among the language arts. Among the functions, he gives dialectic the fundamental task, teaching, and adds part of moving because he believes the method is the same. Among the virtues, dialectic is concerned with convincingness which also assumes the central role. Agricola is concerned to claim for dialectic, and hence for his book, the central thinking part of language competence, leaving only correct usage to grammar and elegant decoration to rhetoric.

The book takes its principal doctrines in roughly equal measure from both subjects. The topics, the definitions, the question and argumentation belong to dialectic, while narration, amplification, *copia* and disposition belong to rhetoric. A more detailed analysis would probably reveal a slight preponderance of rhetorical doctrines. But it is equally important to remember the characteristic doctrines of both subjects which *De inventione dialectica* omits.

Agricola discusses both the four-part oration and the disputation as well as many other genres. He denies that rhetoric and dialectic can be distinguished on the basis of the genre to which they are applied. He shows that rhetoricians use dialogue and that philosophers write long monologues, as well as the other way round (255-256). But his real aim is to transcend the restriction of genre. For him all uses of language are subjects for both dialectic and rhetoric because both subjects describe processes which can be applied to any composition. On the other hand there are also moments in the book when he writes as though the four-part oration or the syllogism was the type of all discourse.

The audience is very important to Agricola in suggesting material and in all stages of organisation. The people to whom a speech is addressed have to be considered equally carefully in orations, disputations, poems, and treatises. The topics and the methods of dialectic can be used to gather material for teaching, moving and pleasing an audience. The audience must be considered throughout the process of invention and disposition rather than, as some rhetoric manuals imply, only when choosing between direct

and indirect approach in the *exordium*.

Although dialectic is discoursing *probabiliter*, Agricola's notion of the convincing includes the possibility of using necessary arguments and reaching reliable conclusions. He speaks of deception as a misuse of language skills, though he uses Sinon's speech as an example of exposition and he suggests concealment as a tactic in disputation. He never praises the ability of the speaker to turn the minds of his audience away from the facts of a case, as Quintilian had.

For Agricola dialectic teaches people to use natural language to teach, move and please others. He respects both the necessity of using language as it is, and the breadth of functions involved in so doing. In general Agricola draws rhetoric and dialectic together. While he goes further in some directions than other dialectics, his book also seems to be rooted in the topics and in the construction of chains of inference, with other functions of language considered in so far as context requires, and in so far as they can be treated by topical means, or can bring success to what one is trying to do through the topics.

#### *De inventione dialectica and Rhetoric*

*De inventione dialectica* also makes contributions to rhetoric and dialectic considered separately. In particular it addresses several of the problem issues to which I drew attention in chapter one. Agricola sometimes assumes the structure of the four-part oration where it is not the only option, but he never allows his account to be dominated by it. He shows how a speaker can invent material and organise it as argumentation or exposition without assuming that the overall shape of the composition is predetermined. When the time comes to speak of large-scale structure, he gives examples of many different kinds. By explaining the thinking behind the four-part oration as well as the occasions on which it may be varied, he leaves it as one form among others, with advantages in certain situations, not as the undisputed master of the whole process. The organisation of his treatment of disposition could be improved—the orders of questions and argumentations could be drawn together and the precepts divided more clearly into general principles, and adaptations and qualifications—but there is no doubt that he restores disposition to a position of importance in the language arts. He shows that there are choices to be made in disposition and gives some indications of the factors which may influence them. He rejects the idea that a speech should be invented part by part in a predetermined sequence.

Partly as a result of his reconsideration of disposition, there is also an improvement in the treatment of the audience. Instead of being regarded as given, or considered merely in order to determine which type of oratory is involved, or which types of *exordium* and peroration to employ, the audience has now to be considered throughout the whole process of invention and disposition. Agricola provides no list of situations or audience types. Each audience and situation has to be thought about in relation to the material of the oration and the goals of the speaker. Agricola's textbook brings the audience back into the process of composition, but perhaps he places too much reliance on commonsense or on what will inevitably occur to the speaker.

Emotional manipulation is also treated more fully as an aspect of the whole composition, instead of merely as a component of the peroration. Because it lacks an element of mystery Agricola's discussion of emotion can seem less powerful than those of Cicero and Quintilian. But it was an advance to bring the subject within the sphere of logical discussion, to provide a general analysis as well as practical tips, and especially to refer to Aristotle's treatment of the different types of emotion for further study. Many writers on rhetoric had neglected this resource.

Because of the way he delineates his subject Agricola inevitably makes no contribution to the problems connected with the few levels of style, and the many and poorly organised figures of thought and speech. There is, however, a sense in which (without really being aware of the fact, or attempting to draw his remarks together) he promotes in his discussions of exposition, argumentation, *copia*, brevity and amplification a different approach to style, centred on a conception of texture. Among the topics and among his discussion of literary examples, there are some extremely perceptive incidental remarks on the workings and effects of particular tropes and figures. There are many passages in the work, particularly in the discussions of examples, from which any student of rhetoric can learn something.

Rather surprisingly (and perhaps without meaning to) Agricola also contributes to the defence of rhetoric. While arguing that dialectic ought to be considered as an art, he explains that when someone uses dialectic deceptively it is the fault of the person not the art (191). This has something in common with the defence of rhetoric offered by Aristotle and Quintilian.<sup>24</sup> But Agricola goes on to argue that the person who is deceived

---

<sup>24</sup> *Rhetoric*, 1355a21-b7, *Institutio oratoria*, 2.16.1-10, 17.36-40.

by dialectic would be more likely to avoid this fate if he had a sound understanding of the art. The purpose of studying deceptive arguments is to avoid being deceived by them.<sup>25</sup> This argument can be employed to defend widespread teaching of rhetoric.

Agricola gives relatively little attention to epideictic rhetoric. In his introduction he does not name praise and blame among the activities which orators customarily undertake (2), and in book two he records that some authorities doubt whether praise or blame involves a question at all (238). In his section on the unopposed oration, Agricola explains a technique for finding the key question in many subtypes of epideictic: consolation, congratulation, and orations at weddings and funerals (244-245). He devotes three pages to discussing the order of arguments in epideictic orations (435-437). There are also a few incidental comments<sup>26</sup> and some discussion of examples of epideictic,<sup>27</sup> not to mention the analysis of *Pro lege Manilia*, which is partly epideictic. These instances are heavily outweighed by Agricola's references to other forms of writing, and in no way match up to the importance which renaissance authors generally are said to give to epideictic.<sup>28</sup> Although Agricola is typical of his age in regarding the *Aeneid* as a portrayal of a hero's responses to all the vicissitudes of life, he was not among those who saw all literature as epideictic.

#### *De inventione dialectica and Dialectic*

Agricola also makes contributions to some of the problems in the textbook tradition of dialectic. The tradition has always needed a proper treatment of the topics. Agricola's is a considerable improvement on any previous version. It is full, clear, unconstrained by maxims, of wide application and well explained. Agricola recognizes the topics as diverse, provisional and capable of being used in different ways, but he shows how they can be applied to arguing, and writing in general. He is neither over rigid nor

<sup>25</sup> *DID*, p. 191: 'et qui fallitur, si artem calleret, vel nequaquam id, vel minus utique pateretur...Aperienda enim sunt, ut caveantur mala.' This argument has something in common with Aristotle's justification of *Sophistical Refutations*.

<sup>26</sup> *DID*, pp. 89, 260, 389.

<sup>27</sup> *DID*, pp. 119, 280, 389, 395, 402-403, 431.

<sup>28</sup> O. B. Hardison, *The Enduring Monument* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1962), B. Vickers, 'Epideictic and Epic in the Renaissance', *New Literary History*, 14 (1982-83), pp. 497-537, *In Defence of Rhetoric*, pp. 54-62, A. J. Minnis et al. eds, *Medieval Literary Theory and Criticism* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 277-313, J. W. O'Malley, *Praise and Blame in Renaissance Rome* (Durham, North Carolina, 1979), C. Kallendorf, *In Praise of Aeneas* (Hanover, New Hampshire, 1989). See also references in chapter 10, note 34 above.

merely the exponent of a practical verbal drill.

He also provides the discussion of middle and larger scale structures which is absent from the tradition. In Aristotle one moves directly from the syllogism to the method of axiomatic presentation. Agricola has observations on chains of arguments and on the ways in which they are put together. He also analyses the logical structure of compositions and shows that many other effective large scale argumentative structures are found alongside demonstration.

In my view Agricola's (and Valla's) reassertion that the object language of dialectic ought to be not a semi-formalised subdialect, but real language with all its resources, is another improvement. Many historians of logic, with their eyes on the triumph of formal logic, would see it as a mistake.

It seems to me (following Valla) that what can be argued in tightly constructed syllogistic chains (i.e. in ways that are formally guaranteed to be correct) is both limited and dependent on the way the arguer organizes the genera. In the world of things, and in real language, on the other hand, there is a wide range of convincing arguments which can be made. Much of this would have to be termed material implication (i.e. dependent on relations holding between the particular things under discussion). The topics, in a version like Agricola's, are a reasonably generalised yet flexible way of getting at the kind of arguments that can be made using material implication. A treatment like Agricola's also recognizes that not all these arguments are equally strong, that their force must be judged before they are used, and that they will need to be expressed in suitable words. If the logical tradition turns its back on something like this, it renounces its responsibility to understand some of the most important and fruitful ways in which people draw inferences.

*De inventione dialectica* does not address the problems in metaphysics raised by the earlier books of Aristotle's *Organon*. Agricola assumes that Aristotle's metaphysical system is workable, and he elaborates it a little (in a strongly realist direction) in order to explain how the topics work. In the same way his whole approach to reasoning *probabiliter* is centred on the use of the topics.<sup>29</sup> Agricola's most significant contributions to dialectic are

---

<sup>29</sup> Real advances in understanding probability were made when a statistical approach was developed in the mid-seventeenth century. I. Hacking, *The Emergence of Probability* (Cambridge, 1975), B. J. Shapiro, *Probability and Certainty in Seventeenth-Century England* (Princeton, 1983). Work on seventeenth-century probability theory subsequent to Hacking is discussed in L. Daston, *Classical Probability in the Enlightenment* (Princeton, 1988), pp. 11-14. M. Warner, *Philosophical Finesse* (Oxford, 1989) is helpful on the relation between Baconian and Pascalian notions of probability, as on many other related ideas.

his reassertion of the value of the topics and his insistence on the practical use of dialectic in reading and writing real language and in thinking.

*De inventione dialectica* is not so systematic as a standard dialectic text aims to be, yet it deals with a broader range of inferences and techniques of persuasion. It could not be axiomatised. The successful application of the system depends on perception, adaptability and judgement rather than on any formal guarantee. These are good qualities to involve and encourage. Their application is assisted by the model procedures suggested for the purposes of practice.

Agricola's work is not so wide-ranging as a rhetoric, but it is more unified, and it avoids the compartmentalisation which can weaken rhetorical invention. The matter which his system invents is less genre-dominated, much more rooted in the particular issue and circumstances of a case, and therefore harder for an opponent to dismiss. His step by step methods are restricted to lower level procedures, and ideally to the learning stage. The higher level decisions have to be made by bringing together facts, characters, the purpose, considerations of audience and the body of general precepts. The degree of separation involved makes the process manageable, but everything important has to be brought together at the point where the chief decisions are taken.

Agricola creates a system which combines drills, judgements and a degree of unification, but he is also aware of the dangers of systems: uniformity, lack of original thought, predictable solutions. So he intersperses his generative instructions with detailed analyses of the arguments and implications of great writers. The gap which exists between what the system and its general advice lead to, and what has actually been done, suggests a space for further endeavour and new solutions. Imitation depends on understanding the structures, reading the best authors and trying to understand their effects by analysing and altering what they do. *De inventione dialectica* teaches reading and thinking by describing the tools for thought and the processes by which they are applied, and by recording its author's perceptions about his own reading.

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

### THE DIFFUSION OF *DE INVENTIONE DIALECTICA*

Between August 1479, when Agricola completed *De inventione dialectica*, and his death in October 1485, the work was seen only by a few of his friends. During this period, and in the twenty years after his death, Agricola became very famous in northern humanist circles, but most of his admirers had not read his major work.<sup>1</sup> Yet from 1515 onwards more than forty editions of *De inventione dialectica* were published and it became one of the most often printed dialectic books of the sixteenth century. Syllabuses and testimonia indicate that it was required reading for mid-century northern humanists, and references to the work can be traced in textbooks which continued to be used into the seventeenth century.

In the next six chapters I shall discuss the influence of *De inventione dialectica*.<sup>2</sup> This chapter outlines the story of the diffusion of the book. Chapter fourteen describes the way in which it was used, on the basis of evidence from university statutes, commentaries and borrowings in other textbooks. Chapters fifteen to seventeen are devoted to four important sixteenth-century authors who use Agricola's work: Erasmus, Vives, Melanchthon and Ramus. In chapter eighteen I attempt to place Agricola among the sixteenth-century schools of rhetoric and dialectic and I suggest some ways in which his ideas were put into practice by readers and writers.

#### *Manuscript Diffusion*

The manuscript which Agricola completed in August 1479 contained many excisions and marginal additions. While Agricola continued his journey back to Groningen, Dietrich von Plieningen, the dedicatee of the work, remained in Dillingen to complete a fair copy, which was sent to Agricola's

---

<sup>1</sup> See C. Santing, 'Theodoricus Ulsensius, alter Agricola? The popularity of Agricola with early Dutch humanists', in F. Akkerman, A. Vanderjagt eds., *Rodolphus Agricola Phrisius* (Leiden, 1988), pp. 170-180, P. S. Allen, 'The letters of Rudolph Agricola', *The English Historical Review*, 21 (1906), pp. 302-317 (316-317), hereafter Allen. This article gives an exemplary account of the recovery of Agricola's texts.

<sup>2</sup> On influence as the wrong way round: M. Baxandall, *Patterns of Intention* (New Haven, 1985), pp. 58-62, 141.

friend Adolph Occo. Agricola himself was left without a copy. In October 1480 he asked Occo to have a copy made for him. In October 1482, from Heidelberg, he wrote saying that he had heard that Occo had sent a copy to Cologne, and that he was hoping to pick it up there.<sup>3</sup>

Alexander Hegius, who was later Erasmus's teacher, had heard about the work before 20 September 1480, and may have read it prior to his letter of 17 December 1484, when in the context of a discussion of using Agricola's translations in the school in Deventer, 'he did not dare to ask Agricola to make an abridgement of his *Dialectic*'.<sup>4</sup> This seems to imply that Hegius would have liked to use a shorter version for his classes. It may also suggest that he was using some of its ideas in his teaching. Alardus later reported that he had seen Hegius's copy of *De inventione dialectica*.<sup>5</sup> This copy would probably have been provided by Agricola himself. If we assume that both Occo and Agricola retained copies,<sup>6</sup> at least four manuscript copies existed at the time of Agricola's death: Agricola's original manuscript, which Dietrich von Plieningen retained; the fair copy Dietrich made for Adolph Occo; the copy which Occo sent to Agricola and which presumably returned to Occo with the rest of Agricola's papers; and the copy Agricola sent to Hegius.

None of these manuscripts survives, but two others do. One, which now belongs to the Württembergische Landesbibliothek in Stuttgart,<sup>7</sup> was written out probably in the 1490s for the Agricola collection of the von Plieningen brothers. Presumably the scribe, Johann Pfeutzer, made this copy from Agricola's original manuscript which Dietrich had kept. Although the von Plieningen brothers conscientiously collected Agricola's works with a view to preserving them, they did not attempt to publish them themselves. In 1527 a nephew of Dietrich von Plieningen allowed Caspar Vollandius to print the *Oratio de nativitate Christi* from a manuscript in his

<sup>3</sup> K. Hartfelder, 'Unedierte Briefe von Rudolf Agricola', *Festschrift der badischen Gymnasien* (Karlsruhe, 1886), pp. 1-36 (hereafter *Briefe*), pp. 19, 21, 23.

<sup>4</sup> *Lucubrations*, p. 190. 'Dialecticorum tuorum breviarium non audeo petere ut facias.' K. Krafft and W. Crecelius, 'Beiträge zur Geschichte des Humanismus am Niederrhein und in Westfalen', *Zeitschrift des bergischen Geschichtsvereins*, 11 (1876), pp. 1-9 (6).

<sup>5</sup> *DID*, pp. 11-12.

<sup>6</sup> It is possible but unlikely that Occo gave his copy to Agricola, and/or that Agricola gave his to Hegius. Other copies may have belonged to close friends of Agricola like Dalberg, Johann Agricola, Reuchlin and Barbireau.

<sup>7</sup> Cod. Poet et Philol. 40, 36. F. Adelmann, *Dietrich von Plieningen* (Munich, 1981), pp. 27, 36. Adelmann gives the date of 1493, but W. Irtenkauf et al., *Die Handschriften der Württembergischen Landesbibliothek Stuttgart*, I. 2, *Codices Poetici et Philologici* (Wiesbaden, 1981), prefer 'probably last decade of the fifteenth century', p. 112.

possession,<sup>8</sup> but no text of *De inventione dialectica* was made available for printing from a von Plieningen family source. There is another manuscript in the university library in Uppsala whose provenance is unknown, but whose script suggests a date at the end of the fifteenth century or the beginning of the sixteenth. My sample collations suggest that it is more closely related to the Stuttgart manuscript than to any of the printed editions.<sup>9</sup>

It appears that all the copies made in the 1480s and 1490s remained close to Agricola's immediate circle of friends, and that none of them thought of getting the work printed. Hegius was the only person closely involved with education who had read the text at an early stage, and he seems to have thought an abridgement more suitable for the use of his pupils than the work itself. Later when others wanted to print it manuscripts were hard to find. It is worth emphasizing that this disappearance of the text of *De inventione dialectica* contrasts with the continuity of the cult of Agricola's name, which was maintained orally in Heidelberg, as Melanchthon reports, and the northern Netherlands, and in a more international way in Erasmus's correspondence.<sup>10</sup> This cult was also encouraged by the availability of some of Agricola's minor works, notably *De formando studio*, in printed editions of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.

#### *The Louvain edition of 1515*

The first stage of the sixteenth century rediscovery of *De inventione dialectica* was carried out mainly by a group of scholars working in Louvain. Urged on by Erasmus, they collected Agricola's minor works and found a manuscript of *De inventione dialectica* in the collection of James Faber in Deventer. Since Faber was the man who published Hegius's letter mentioned above, his manuscript may well have been Hegius's copy. Unfortunately this manuscript proved to be so faulty that it had to be copied out and corrected by Gerard Geldenhouwer, one of Agricola's biographers, Alardus and Dorp before it could be printed in January 1515.<sup>11</sup> Dorp's

<sup>8</sup> Allen, p. 307.

<sup>9</sup> Universitetsbibliotek, Ms. C.927. I owe my knowledge of this manuscript to the kindness of Professor P. O. Kristeller. Professor Julian Brown identified 'littera bastarda' in the hands of this manuscript.

<sup>10</sup> *Lucubrationes*, +3<sup>r</sup>, for Erasmus, see chapter 15 below, notes 3-7.

<sup>11</sup> *Lucubrationes*, \*4<sup>r-v</sup>, pp. 203-204. Allen, pp. 304-309. J. Fichard, *Virorum qui superiori nostroque seculo...vitae* (Frankfurt, 1536), 86<sup>v</sup>. The contacts between humanists involved in producing the first edition will be discussed more fully by L. Jardine in her

preface compares the work favourably with Cicero and Aristotle for those who seek the true art of eloquence.<sup>12</sup> The printer was Dirk Martens, who had produced Peter Gillis's edition of Agricola's minor works in 1511 and who later printed the first edition of More's *Utopia*.<sup>13</sup>

Geldenhouwer, Alardus and Phrissemius, the author of the first commentary on *De inventione dialectica*, have all left comments on Faber's manuscript. All three emphasize the difficulty of producing a fair copy from the manuscript, and the existence of marginal additions to the text. Phrissemius and Geldenhouwer claim that it was partly in Agricola's own hand; Alardus instead states that the manuscript he subsequently discovered was Agricola's autograph.<sup>14</sup> Probably Faber's manuscript was difficult, though it is understandable that the editors would want to emphasize the importance of their role. In any event their labours produced a quite useable text, though one which is inferior in places to both manuscripts and to Alardus's 1539 edition.

The 1515 edition is a large, elegantly printed but rather severe text which circulated among many of the leading humanist scholars in northern Europe. In May 1515, John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester and Chancellor of the University of Cambridge, wrote to Erasmus, who was briefly in England that spring, that he had finished the book. He had never read any dialectic book which was so well expressed and so learned. Agricola fully deserved Erasmus's praise. Fisher would rather have been taught by him than be an archbishop anywhere.<sup>15</sup>

---

forthcoming book, *Distinctive Discipline*.

<sup>12</sup> R. Agricola, *De inventione dialectica* (Louvain, 1515), title page.

<sup>13</sup> G. C. Huisman, *Rudolph Agricola: A Bibliography of Printed Works and Translations* (Nieuwkoop, 1985), hereafter Huisman, no. 4, J. B. Trapp and H. Schulte Herbrüggen, *The King's Good Servant* (London, 1977), no. 44.

<sup>14</sup> J. Fichard, *Vitae*, 86<sup>V</sup>-87<sup>T</sup>. Geldenhouwer signed off his portion of the text with an epigram at the end of book 1, but only Dorp is mentioned on the title page. Lisa Jardine kindly drew this to my attention. R. Agricola, *De inventione dialectica*, with Phrissemius's commentary (Cologne, 1528), Huisman no. 16, reprinted Hildesheim, 1976, hereafter Phrissemius (1528), pp. 282-83. Even before he had seen the manuscript Phrissemius had formulated the theory that the text was a first draft which Agricola had not been able to revise, pp. 129, 146. Later notes (and one earlier marginal note to the text) report readings from the manuscript, pp. 43, 297, 343, 362. He also raises the possibility that it was almost a preparatory notebook (where one might think it was in his interest to claim its authority), Phrissemius (1528), p. 282: 'aliud nihil quam sylvam quandam futuri adhuc operis deprehendi: in iis praesertim, quae sua manu exararat Rodolphus'. But the 1515 text presumably based on the same manuscript (unless Faber had two manuscripts of *De inventione dialectica*, which seems rather unlikely) is too similar to the Stuttgart manuscript for it to have been reconstructed from preparatory notes. *Lucubrationes*, \*4<sup>r</sup>, p. 204, *DID*, pp. 10, 59.

<sup>15</sup> Erasmus, *Opus Epistolarum*, ed. P. S. Allen, H. M. Allen, H. W. Garrod, 12 vols

Vives, who was in Bruges from 1514 and at Louvain between 1517 and 1522, and was closely associated with Erasmus at this period, must have used this edition, since he knew *De inventione dialectica* before 1520. His continuing interest in the work is shown by the fact that most of his citations of the book occur in publications dating from his final period in Bruges, between 1528 and 1540.<sup>16</sup> Another Louvain associate of Gilles, Dorp and Erasmus was Claudius Cantiuncula, who left Louvain in 1517, going on to become an important lawyer in Basel. His *Topica* (1520), which applies the principles of dialectic to legal practice, makes considerable use of Agricola. Cantiuncula's list of topics offers a way of mastering a large number of legal opinions and comments. Knowledge of the topics helps in speaking, in explaining difficult points of canon and civil law and in understanding the best authors. He urges anyone who has doubts about the general usefulness of the topics to read Agricola thoroughly.<sup>17</sup> Two later exponents of the genre of legal dialectic, Johannes Apel (1533) and Christopher Hegendorff (1535), both followers of Melanchthon, also cite details from Agricola.<sup>18</sup>

Although Melanchthon had known of Agricola since 1509, he too first read *De inventione dialectica* in the Louvain edition, in 1516 at Tübingen. He often praised and recommended Agricola, and in places followed his teachings. Some of Melanchthon's followers made use of details and ideas from Agricola, most notably Ringelbergius and Valerius.<sup>19</sup>

In 1516, Alardus, who had played a part in the first publication of *De inventione dialectica*, saw more Agricola papers in the collection of Pompeius Occo, a prosperous merchant, of whom a fine portrait (c. 1531) by Dirck Jacobsz. exists in the Rijksmuseum. Pompeius was a nephew of Agricola's friend Adolph Occo, the recipient of the first fair copy of *De*

(Oxford 1906-1958), hereafter *Opus Epistolarum*, II, p. 90.

<sup>16</sup> See chapter 15 below. On Vives's movements, as on many other biographical details in this section, I have used P. G. Bietenholz ed., *Contemporaries of Erasmus*, 3 vols, (Toronto, 1984-87). C. G. Noreña, *Juan Luis Vives* (The Hague, 1970), p. 65 claims that Bartholomaeus Latomus was a close friend of Vives but on the evidence he offers it seems only that Vives knew James Latomus, *ibid.*, p. 57, n. 23, p. 130, p. 277, n. 3.

<sup>17</sup> On legal dialectics generally, V. Piano Mortari, 'Dialettica e Giurisprudenza', *Annali di storia dell diritto*, I (1957), pp. 293-401. C. Cantiuncula, *Topica* (Basel, 1520), A2<sup>v</sup>-3<sup>r</sup>, A4<sup>r</sup>-v, B2<sup>v</sup>-3<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>18</sup> J. Apel, *Methodica Dialectices ratio ad iurisprudentiam adcommodata* (Nuremberg, 1535), F1<sup>v</sup>, I2<sup>r</sup>, C. Hegendorff, *Libri dialecticae legalis quinque* (Paris, 1535), H8<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>19</sup> See chapter 16 below. J. Ringelbergius, *Lucubrationes* (Basel, 1541, repr. Nieuwkoop, 1967), pp. 229, 230, C. Valerius, *Tabulae quibus totius dialecticae praecepta maxime ad usum disserendi... ordine perspicua digestae* (Antwerp, 1582), D4<sup>v</sup>, D7<sup>r</sup>, D8<sup>v</sup>, E1<sup>r</sup>, E2<sup>v</sup>. According to W. Risse, *Bibliographia Logica (1472-1800)* (Hildesheim, 1965), hereafter Risse, eighteen editions of Valerius's work were printed between 1551 and 1596.

*inventione dialectica*, to whom Agricola had also left his papers. Alardus could not at first obtain a text of the work from this source. In 1528 however, through Haio Hermann (who had married Pompeius Occo's daughter) Alardus obtained more minor works and a better text of the *Dialectic*. These manuscripts, along with the existing printed texts, formed the basis of his 1539 editions of *De inventione dialectica* and the minor works.<sup>20</sup> Although his text is an improvement on the Louvain edition, the date which he copies and a passage omitted in his edition but present in both extant manuscripts indicate that the manuscript he was following was not Agricola's original or Dietrich von Plieningen's first fair copy.<sup>21</sup>

### Cologne

The fame and the use of *De inventione dialectica* was increased by another group of scholars and teachers, based in Cologne, where Alardus moved in 1515 and which he visited frequently after his return to Louvain. The first Cologne edition (the first to give chapter titles) was produced by Heinrich von Neuss, who was active in a small way as a printer between 1505 and 1522. Among his other editions are works by Erasmus.<sup>22</sup> The second Cologne edition (1523) first printed the commentary by Johann Matthaeus Phrissemius. It was this edition, with its summaries and its commentary, which really made the work available for teaching. Phrissemius taught in the faculty of arts at Cologne at least between 1517 and 1523. The preface to his work indicates that he was teaching *De inventione dialectica* in the *paedagogia* of the university at this time.<sup>23</sup> There is also a record from this period of an attempt to include *De inventione dialectica* in the statutes of the arts faculty.<sup>24</sup> In any event the succession of editions from Cologne surely indicates that the work continued to be taught there. Bartholomaeus

<sup>20</sup> *Lucubrations*, \*4<sup>r</sup>-+1<sup>v</sup>, Allen, pp. 306-308.

<sup>21</sup> Alardus prints a date 'Anno LXXX.III Non. FB' which presumably comes from the manuscript he is following (since it appears in none of the earlier editions), *DID*, p. 455. (This date also appears in the Uppsala manuscript. I am grateful to Dr Lothar Mundt for reminding me of this.) Where *DID*, p. 369, line 10 gives 'conservatioque. Destinata', the Stuttgart manuscript, fol. 140<sup>r</sup>, gives 'conservatioque generis humani per legitimam posteritatem. Effecta eadem quae finis liberi et generis humani conservatio. Destinata'. The Uppsala manuscript agrees, and the passage is evidently required.

<sup>22</sup> J. Benzing, *Die Buchdrucker des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts Im Deutschen Sprachgebiet* (Wiesbaden, 1963), q.v.

<sup>23</sup> See chapter 13 below. On the movements of Alardus and Phrissemius, see *Contemporaries of Erasmus*, E. Meuthen, *Kölner Universitätsgeschichte*, I, *Die alte Universität* (Cologne, 1988), pp. 215-216, 229, 245-246, 254.

<sup>24</sup> F. J. Bianco, *Die alte Universität Köln* (Cologne, 1855), p. 409. E. Meuthen, pp. 229, 231, 234.

Latomus, author of the first (1530) and most printed (26 editions) epitome, also worked in the Cologne arts faculty between 1526 and 1530. The earlier version of the dedication of his epitome (1530) suggests that he too taught *De inventione dialectica* there.<sup>25</sup> Although Cologne did not produce the first edition of *De inventione dialectica*, it printed the work over a longer period than any other city and it introduced most of the innovations: Phrissemius's commentary in 1523, Alardus's new text and commentary in 1539, the combined commentary shortly thereafter, Latomus's epitome in 1530, and that of Alardus in 1538. Of these the most important are Phrissemius's commentary, Latomus's epitome and Alardus's text.

#### TABLE OF COLOGNE EDITIONS

The first column for each edition represents text or epitome, the second the author of the epitome or of the commentary provided with the text, using the abbreviations set out below.

Total number of editions: 31  
18 Texts (T), 13 epitomes(E)

T P													
T P													
T P													
E	L	T	P	T	Com								
E	L	T	A	T	Com								
T	-	T	P	E	L	E	L	T	Com	T	Com	T	Com
T	P	T	P	E	L	E	A	E	L	T	Com	E	L
1515	1520	1525	1530	1535	1540	1545	1550	1555	1560	1565	1570	1575	
-9	-4	-9	-4	-9	-4	-9	-4	-9	-4	-9	-4	-9	-9

Second column, author of commentary or epitome:

For texts the second column indicates the commentary included with the text: -: no commentary

A: Alardus

P: Phrissemius

Com: Combined commentary of Phrissemius, Alardus and Hadamarius, edited by Joannes Noviomagus. In practice this commentary is mainly an abridgement of Phrissemius's, however it accompanies and is keyed to Alardus's improved text.

For epitomes the second column indicates the author:

<sup>25</sup> See chapter 14 below.

A: Alardus (epitome of book one)      L: Latomus<sup>26</sup>

The table for Cologne emphasizes the regularity of its production of Agricola's work, two items every five years for most of the sixty-year period, interrupted most strikingly by the production of 15 items between 1530 and 1544. It is noticeable that the peak is considerably smaller and a little earlier than that at Paris. Part of the peak may be the result of successive innovations: Latomus's epitome, Phrissemius's new text, the new text of Alardus and the combined commentary. Even granted that the work continued to be taught at Cologne University a considerable increase in local interest, or in export prospects, is needed to explain the printing of five editions of the text between 1535 and 1539. In total, Cologne produced eighteen editions of the text and thirteen of the epitome. After 1550, text and epitome tended to be produced in almost equal numbers.

University records confirm the teaching of *De inventione dialectica* in Cologne later in the century. In November 1557 there was an examination on Agricola's work and Aristotle's *Sophistical Refutations*.<sup>27</sup> It is also mentioned in programmes for lecture courses in 1560-1, 1561-2, and 1577-8.<sup>28</sup> In the corresponding programme for 1578-9, the place previously occupied by Agricola is taken by a compendium of the topics.<sup>29</sup> This date coincides with the end of Agricola printing in Cologne.

<sup>26</sup> This table and the others which follow are based on Gerda Huisman, *Rudolph Agricola: A Bibliography of Printed Works and Translations* (Nieuwkoop, 1985), nos. 6-82, with her permission. I have made the following amendments:

The dates for Huisman nos. 7 (1535), 8 (1540) and 9 (1532) come from W. Ong, *Ramus and Talon Inventory* (Cambridge, Mass., 1958), pp. 534-558, his nos. 21, 33 and 15 respectively. These dates are reasonable approximations, but they may be out by a year or two.

Huisman no. 10 must have appeared between 1539 (the first printing of Alardus's text) and 1541 (the last year in which Alopecius is known to have produced a book). In the tables I have assigned it to 1540.

Huisman no. 56 has been inspected in Naples by Dr John Robertson. He finds that it contains the commentary of Phrissemius.

Huisman no. 81 is omitted on the grounds that it is almost certainly a variant of no. 6, with an 'L' inserted on the title-page. See Huisman's plates 5 and 32.

In addition, I think it likely that no. 31 is a variant of no. 30, but I have not omitted it. John Robertson and Gerda Huisman have independently discovered a variant title-page for Huisman no. 57, which reads: 'Apud Guglielmum Richardum in pingui galli-/na e regione collegii Cameracensis (with device)'. I am most grateful to both of them for their help in compiling these tables.

<sup>27</sup> L. Lukacs ed., *Monumenta Paedagogica Societatis Iesu*, III (Rome, 1974), p. 603: '4 idus ab 8 usque ad medium duodecimae examinati sunt in Rodulpho et *Elenchis sophisticis Aristotelis*'.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 542, 545, 548, F. J. Bianco, pp. 322-324.

<sup>29</sup> F. J. Bianco, p. 325. Meuthen, pp. 365-66, suggests that Latomus's epitome of Agricola was still in use in Cologne at the beginning of the seventeenth century.

*Paris*

Scholars and teachers from Cologne played an important part in the next stage of the work's diffusion, to Paris in the 1530s.<sup>30</sup> Jacques Omphalius studied and taught in Cologne between 1515 and 1524, when he transferred to Louvain. There he met Johann Sturm, who had arrived at the Trilingual College in the same year. In 1529 both moved to Paris and introduced the teaching of *De inventione dialectica* there. In 1530 the faculty of theology of Paris made its famous complaint that the faculty of arts was teaching Agricola more than Aristotle. The faculty of arts replied that Paris theology was a laughing stock for playing at dialectic instead of reading the gospels.<sup>31</sup> In 1531 Latomus also moved to Paris, as professor of rhetoric at the Collège de Sainte-Barbe, where he too taught *De inventione dialectica*. Between 1534 and 1542 he was professor of Latin rhetoric at the Collège Royal de France.<sup>32</sup> Jean Le Voyer (Visorius) is said to have written his epitome of Agricola, which Colines published in 1534, while he was teaching literature at the Collège de Bourgogne.<sup>33</sup>

From the time of Latomus's arrival there was an extraordinary burst of Agricola publishing, which lasted until he left Paris in 1542. Presumably this was a result of widespread teaching of the text in Paris. Since Omphalius and Sturm had moved on before 1542, one must assume that several other Parisian professors also taught *De inventione dialectica*. Even after 1542 editions and epitomes continued to be produced regularly in Paris until the 1560s.

Among the people who brought *De inventione dialectica* from Cologne to Paris (although one should remember that the work may well have been taught in Louvain at this period) both Latomus and Omphalius issued other works which show Agricolan influence. Latomus made use of Agricola in his commentaries on Cicero's *Topica*, *Partitiones oratoriae* and George of Trebizond's *Dialectic*, and his own *Summa totius rationis disserendi*

---

<sup>30</sup> I am indebted to Kees Meerhoff for information on Omphalius, Sturm, Latomus and connections between Cologne and Paris.

<sup>31</sup> F. Du Boulay, *Historia Universitatis Parisiensis*, 6 vols, (Paris, 1665-1673), VI, pp. 227-235.

<sup>32</sup> G. Cambier, 'L'oeuvre poétique et oratoire de Latomus', *Latomus*, 22 (1963), pp. 839-844, 'Les œuvres de controverse et de rhétorique de Latomus', *Latomus*, 23 (1964), pp. 820-827, E. Wolff, *Un humaniste Luxembourgeois au XVIe siècle Barthélemy Latomus D'Arlon* (Luxembourg, 1902), C. P. Goujet, *Mémoire historique et littéraire sur le Collège Royal de France* (Paris, 1758, repr. Geneva, 1971), II, p. 341.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, I, p. 17.

(1527).<sup>34</sup> Omphalius produced a commentary on *Pro lege Manilia* which follows Agricola.<sup>35</sup> Sturm's later publications by contrast make little or no use of Agricola, concentrating instead on Hermogenes.

Ramus first came across *De inventione dialectica* when he was a student in Paris. In its syllabus, in its emphasis on usefulness, and in its use of literary examples, his own dialectic can be seen as developing out of Agricola's. However the developments are always highly individual, and by the final stages there is almost no detailed similarity. Both Ramus and his followers produced analyses of texts which seem to owe something to Agricola's teaching on dialectical commentary, and to the example of his commentary on *Pro lege Manilia*.<sup>36</sup>

---

<sup>34</sup> Cicero, *Topica* (with the commentaries of Boethius, Visorius, Latomus, Melanchthon, Hegendorff and Gouvéa) (Paris, T. Richard, 1550), c3<sup>r</sup>, d2<sup>r</sup>, d4<sup>v</sup>-e1<sup>r</sup>, h2<sup>v</sup>, l1<sup>v</sup>, l2<sup>v</sup>, Cicero, *De partitionibus oratoris dialogus* (with the commentaries of Strebaeus, Latomus and Hegendorff, and with Sturm's dialogue) (Paris, 1550), pp. 10, 15, 19-20, 28, 32, G. Trapezuntius, *De re dialectica...scholiis Ioannis Neomagi et Bartholomaei Latomi illustratus* (Lyons, 1559), A2<sup>r-v</sup> (there are many other references to Agricola in this volume, chiefly in the commentary of Neomagus), B. Latomus, *Summa totius rationis disserendi* (Cologne, 1527), 3<sup>r</sup>, B6<sup>v</sup>, D7<sup>r-v</sup>, E5<sup>r</sup>, F7<sup>r</sup>, I7<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>35</sup> See chapter 11, n. 18 above.

<sup>36</sup> See chapter 17 below.

## TABLE OF PARIS EDITIONS

In this table the first letter of each edition indicates text or epitome, the second the author of the commentary or epitome, using the abbreviations set out below.

Total number of editions: 32  
20 texts (T), 12 epitomes (E)

T P													
T P													
T P													
T P													
T -	T P												
T P	T P												
T P	T P												
T P	E L												
T P	T P	E L											
T P	T P	E L											
T P	E V	E L	E L										
T P	E L	E A	E L	E L	T P	E L	E L						
1515	1520	1525	1530	1535	1540	1545	1550	1555	1560	1565	1570	1575	
-9	-4	-9	-4	-9	-4	-9	-4	-9	-4	-9	-4	-9	

Second column, author of commentary or epitome:

All Paris texts have Phrissemius's commentary (P), apart from one for which the commentary is not listed (-).

For epitomes the second column indicates the author:

A: Alardus (epitome of book one)      L: Latomus

V: Visorius

This table shows that by comparison with Cologne, Paris produced its editions over about two-thirds the period with a slightly lower normal production and a very much higher peak. In fact the table tends to underestimate the size of the disparity between peak and average, since the fifteen years 1529-43 saw 26 of Paris's 32 editions. The table also shows the lack of innovation in Paris printings. Only Visorius's epitome was first printed in Paris. In the main Paris printers restricted themselves to two well-established items: Phrissemius's text and commentary, and Latomus's epitome. A further indication of their conservatism is the fact that they never went over to Alardus's improved text. Paris has a marginally higher preference for text over epitome (20:12) compared with Cologne (18:13).

But what really needs explaining is the production of 17 editions of the text and 9 of epitomes between 1529 and 1543. Even granted that Paris was pre-eminent in logic printing (as it now seems that it was in printing in general),<sup>37</sup> these are extremely large totals. On the evidence available from Risse and Ong<sup>38</sup> there was no period at which a comparable number of editions of dialectics by Ramus or Aristotle was produced at Paris within such a short period.

The best explanation for the beginning of Agricola printing in Paris comes from the university. In the same way the abrupt cessation of Paris Agricola printing between 1543 and 1548, with only limited resumption thereafter, might be explained by such factors as overproduction (in 1542, five texts and three epitomes appeared), and the departure of Sturm from Paris on religious grounds.<sup>39</sup> The Aristotelian reaction which resulted in the banning of Ramus's books in 1545 may also have affected the teaching of Agricola. Later the popularity of Ramism itself left less room for other humanist dialectical textbooks.

But explanations like these, which emphasize events within the university of Paris, will not fully explain the number of items produced<sup>40</sup> (since one would expect other Parisian intellectual fashions to leave similar traces) or the more strictly bibliographical problem of the number of printers involved. It is very striking that in 1541-2 editions of Latomus's epitome were set by five printers (Gryphius, Tiletan, Buffet, Calvarin, and Colines and Estienne) and in 1542-3 texts with Phrissemius's commentary (a much larger task) were set by six (Colines, Roigny, Gryphius, Mace, Tiletan and Vidoue). David Shaw, who is writing a book on the production of Pierre Vidoue, has suggested that he enjoyed a close relationship with the Collège de Rheims, situated near his shop. If this principle were extended, as Shaw suggests that it might be,<sup>41</sup> and if many colleges needed the book at roughly the same time, the local printers of each one might be expected to print the text more or less simultaneously. Perhaps Agricola's text would be more likely to illustrate this than some others (including Ramus's) in that, in its case no one attempted to maintain any sort of copyright or privilege. All the same, if this explanation is correct, one

<sup>37</sup> The late C. B. Schmitt informed me that his investigation of Aristotle editions suggested that Paris was a more productive centre of printing than Venice in the sixteenth century.

<sup>38</sup> *Ramus and Talon Inventory* (Cambridge, Mass., 1958).

<sup>39</sup> Sturm left Paris in 1536, Latomus in 1542.

<sup>40</sup> See for example the table of editions of Ramus at the end of this chapter.

<sup>41</sup> Private communications, 1982, 1988.

would expect that some similar cases ought to turn up in Parisian printing. The alternative is to suggest that the demand comes not only from Paris but also from elsewhere in France and northern Europe. Since the book is so large and its likely readership relatively specialised, production in a few large centres may have made more sense than a series of local editions.<sup>42</sup> Historians of print have been reluctant to conclude that large books might be printed for distant markets, but in this case it is the most likely conclusion.

#### *Other European Centres*

From Cologne the teaching of Agricola spread to other Rhineland universities (Mainz and Tübingen in the 1520s) and to Catholic universities in southern Germany (Tübingen again, Vienna and Ingolstadt in the 1550s and 1560s).<sup>43</sup> There is no mention of Agricola in the rather full statutes for Wittenberg, which were frequently revised at the behest of Melanchthon, though Melanchthon continued to recommend Agricola in his textbooks.<sup>44</sup> The 1538 commentary on *De inventione dialectica* by Caspar Rodolphus, who taught at Marburg (which was Protestant) suggests that the work was taught there.<sup>45</sup> The statutes for the Protestant university of Helmstedt, founded in 1575, do not specify the reading of Agricola, but in the discussion of the elements of dialectic (which, like the whole document, owes a lot to Melanchthon) three chapters on the uncovering of topical arguments and on the use of the topics from the second book of *De inventione dialectica* are reprinted in full. Afterwards Agricola is commended as the predecessor of Willichus and Melanchthon in the new dialectic which follows from Aristotle.<sup>46</sup>

Unfortunately there are no further references in the published statutes of universities in the Low Countries or in France. It seems very likely that *De*

<sup>42</sup> R. Hirsch, *Printing, Selling and Reading 1450-1550* (Wiesbaden, 1967), pp. 63-64 provides some evidence of book sales at a distance. On p. 72 he suggests that an edition size of 4,000 books was possible. (British bibliographers usually suggest 1,000 copies as an average edition size.) There is no reason to think that if several editions were produced they would be small.

<sup>43</sup> See chapter 14, notes 51-58, 77 below.

<sup>44</sup> These documents are available in: T. Mutter, *Die Wittenberger Universitaets und Facultaets Statuten vom Jahre 1508* (Halle, 1867), W. Friedensburg ed., *Urkundenbuch der Universität Wittenberg*, part I, 1502-1611 (Magdeburg, 1926), p. 146. For Melanchthon's recommendations of Agricola see chapter 16 below.

<sup>45</sup> Huisman, no. 37, discussed briefly in chapter 14 below.

<sup>46</sup> P. Baumgart, E. Pitz, *Die Statuten der Universität Helmstedt*, (Göttingen, 1963), pp. 134-137.

*inventione dialectica* was taught in Louvain in the late 1520s and early 1530s,<sup>47</sup> and there is a reference in the preface to Hunnaeus's *Dialectica*, which might imply that it continued to be taught there in the 1550s.<sup>48</sup> The universities of Leiden, Franeker and Groningen were founded after Agricola's academic popularity had declined, and so are unlikely to have used *De inventione dialectica* in spite of local sentiment in its favour. The number of Paris editions, and the spread of Paris graduates to other French universities, make it seem likely that *De inventione dialectica* would have been taught elsewhere in France, but I know of no evidence to confirm it.

Outside Cologne and Paris, the following editions of *De inventione dialectica* and its epitomes were produced:

- 1515 Louvain, the first edition of the text alone.
- 1521 Strasbourg, the third edition of the text alone.
- ?1535 Basel, Visorius's epitome. (Huisman no.7)<sup>49</sup>
- 1536 Basel, Latomus's epitome.
- 1537 Basel, Latomus's epitome. Both these editions were produced by Westhemerus and Brylinger. The descriptions are so similar that it may be a case of a reprint or of one edition with two title pages.<sup>50</sup>
- 1538 Frankfurt, Rodolphus's commentary.
- 1538 Leipzig, Latomus's commentary.
- 1539 Lyons, Text with Phrissemius's commentary.
- 1542 Lyons, Alardus's epitome of the first book.

<sup>47</sup> Because Sturm, Omphalius and Latomus, who are connected with the teaching of Agricola in Cologne and Paris, were all at Louvain. Further strong evidence for the use of Agricola at Louvain is provided by the arts faculty's commentary on Aristotle's *Organon* (whose dedicatory epistle is dated 1535). This is a mainly Aristotelian work, arguing out the opinions of previous commentators, but it frequently cites and quotes Agricola as an authority, and its preface emphasizes the connections between rhetoric and dialectic. In considering dialectical invention, it cites Agricola's example about Cato and Marcia and explains that there is no need to say more, or to discuss how you work with questions because Agricola handles these matters so fully. Louvain Arts Faculty, *Commentaria in Isagogen Porphyrii et in omnes libros Aristotelis de dialectica* (Louvain, 1568), a3<sup>r</sup>-5<sup>r</sup>, Kk4<sup>r</sup>. Further references in chapter 14 below. I am grateful to Gilbert Tournoy for information about this book.

<sup>48</sup> A. Hunnaeus, *Dialectica seu Generalia Logices Praecepta omnia* (Antwerp, 1585), advises students to read Agricola's work (T3<sup>v</sup>). The preface, dated 1552, mentions his association with the *paedagogium Castra* (a2<sup>v</sup>). The statutes of 1568 specify Hunnaeus's dialectic but do not mention Agricola. H. Van der Linden, 'L'Université de Louvain en 1568', *Bulletin de la Commission Royale d'histoire*, 77 (1908), pp. 26-27, 29, 30-31, 32.

<sup>49</sup> This date is supplied by Ong, *Inventory*, p. 545 on the basis of the book's appearance. Risso gives 1534.

<sup>50</sup> See Huisman, pp. 39-41.

- 1554 Burgos, first Spanish edition of the text.
- 1559 Venice, first Italian edition of the text.
- 1567 Venice, first edition of the Italian translation.
- 1600 Ath, Latomus's epitome.

All but one of these editions (Lyons 1539 is the exception) can be classified into one of three groups. Either they are pioneering editions of the text (the first two), or they are editions of short commentaries or epitomes (the next few and the last) or they are pioneering editions of the text in southern Europe (the penultimate three). If they are looked at in this way these editions seem to confirm the conclusion that once Cologne and Paris had become established as producers of the text with its commentary, the lengthy operation of setting such a work did not seem worthwhile in other places. Some of the universities where Agricola was certainly taught (e.g. Ingolstadt, Tübingen, Cambridge) are at some distance from towns in which it was printed. If this line of reasoning is correct, the export trade from Cologne and Paris is probably the reason why such notable centres of printing as Strasbourg, Basel, Lyons and Frankfurt produced so few editions. The infrequency of editions in southern Europe would be explained partly by exports and partly by a reluctance to make a place for this kind of northern humanist work in a predominantly Aristotelian syllabus. The case of Strasbourg is particularly surprising in view of the fact that Sturm, who is credited with bringing the study of Agricola to Paris, lived and dominated education there for so long. Perhaps this is strong evidence that Sturm gave up his support for Agricola when he became more interested in Hermogenes.

The alternative view would be that the concentration of editions in Cologne and Paris reflects a concentration of interest in Agricola in northern France, the Netherlands and the lower Rhineland.

### *Overall Pattern of Printing*

## TABLE OF ALL EDITIONS

In this table, the items within each five-year block are broken down according to place (first column) and text or epitome (second column), using the abbreviations set out below.

Total number of editions: 76  
44 texts, 32 epitomes.

**First column, place of publication:**

A: Ath

Ba: Basel

Bu: Burgos

## C: Cologne

## E: Frankfurt

Le: Leipzig

G. Cologne

I. I. Lyons

P. Paris

Ex. Bouvain  
S. Strasbourg

By: Beyonc<sup>e</sup>

### Second column Text or epitome:

T: Text of *De inventione dialectica*

E: Epitome of *De inventione dialectica* or of one of its books

C: Rodolphus's commentary (included in the total of epitomes)

Since we have already noted the concentration of editions in Paris and Cologne, and suggested some reasons for the patterns of production there and the paucity of other editions, two further points may be deduced from the main table. The first is the very large number of editions in total.

The exceptional number of editions of *De inventione dialectica* produced may be indicated by a comparison with Ramus, whose works have long been recognised as a phenomenon of educational publishing.<sup>51</sup> In his *Bibliographia Logica* Risso lists 80 editions of Ramus's *dialectic* (including vernacular versions, but ignoring his various anti-Aristotelian works) between 1543 and 1600. Of these, 56 appear after 1570. There are 19 Paris editions (15 of them before 1570), 8 Cologne editions (6 of them 1565-1579) and 27 Frankfurt editions (all after 1570).

TABLE OF EDITIONS OF RAMUS'S *DIALECTIC* (based on Risso)

Total: 80												Düss	
												Fran	
												Fran	
												Fran	Fran
												Lond	Fran
												Camb	Lond
												Lond	Leid
												Lond	Base
												Base	Rost
												Base	Leid
												Base	Marb
												Base	Hano
												Colo	Fran
												Colo	Fran
												Colo	Fran
												Lyon	Fran
												Fran	Fran
												Fran	Spey
												Fran	Fran
												Fran	Spey
												Fran	Fran
												Fran	Fran
												Fran	Fran
												Fran	Fran
												Fran	Fran
												Fran	Fran
												Fran	Fran
1540	1545	1550	1555	1560	1565	1570	1575	1580	1585	1590	1595		
-4	-9	-4	-9	-4	-9	-4	-9	-4	-9	-4	-9		

<sup>51</sup> A larger audience has been made aware of the importance of Ramus by such books as P. Miller, *The New England Mind in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass., 1939), R. Tuve, *Elizabethan and Metaphysical Imagery* (Chicago, 1947) and C. Hill, *Intellectual Origins of the English Revolution* (Oxford, 1965). See also I. McLean, 'Philosophical books in European markets, 1570-1630: the case of Ramus', in J. Henry and S. Hutton eds., *New Perspectives in Renaissance Thought, Essays in Memory of Charles B. Schmitt* (London, 1990), pp. 253-63. All the figures cited below are based on Risso, who gives the best easily accessible list, although it is now somewhat out of date. The comparison is made unfair because in the previous section the most recent count of Agricola editions is employed.

The main, Paris-based, early diffusion takes place after 1545, then there is a lull in the late 1550s and 1560s. After Ramus's death in the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre, there is a revival of printing, almost entirely in Germany, and largely in Frankfurt, amounting to about ten editions every five years for the rest of the century. The peak of Ramus production is not as high as that for Agricola (and one needs to remember that the text of Agricola is much longer) but it is more sustained. It is only between 1545 and 1554 and after 1565 that more editions of Ramus are printed than of Agricola.<sup>52</sup>

The second point to be made from the table of all editions of *De inventione dialectica* is that the text is almost always either accompanied by some sort of a commentary or replaced with an epitome. Two reasons are given for this. The first is the difficulty of the text. It assumes a good deal of knowledge of Latin literature, sometimes it moves rather fast, and on occasion it is helpful for the student to be reminded of more conventional views. The second reason is that Agricola's text is seen as some sort of modern classic, deserving of the same sort of commentary and aids to study as an ancient text. Both these reasons are mentioned by the authors of commentaries and epitomes.

Another comparison which can easily be made is with Erasmus's highly successful rhetoric textbook *De copia*. *De copia* is shorter than *De inventione dialectica*, and easier to understand. It was used in schools as well as in universities. In 1946 H. D. Rix published a list of 180 editions, of which 153 belong to the sixteenth century.<sup>53</sup> In his opinion there would have been almost as many editions of epitomes and abridgements. The table which follows is based on the list of editions he provides.

---

<sup>52</sup> The Ramus figures are also made harder to interpret because, at the beginning especially, the different printings represent also four or five different stages of Ramus's text. The same person might need, or want, to own representatives of more than one of these stages. See chapter 17 below.

<sup>53</sup> H. D. Rix, 'The editions of Erasmus's *De Copia*', *Studies in Philology*, 43 (1946), pp. 595-618 (601-602). If someone were to repeat Rix's work using modern bibliographies and catalogues the total number of editions would probably be higher, so Rix's figures are not strictly comparable with Huisman's.

## TABLE OF EDITIONS OF ERASMUS'S *DE COPIA* (Based on Rix)

There are many more editions of *De copia* than of *De inventione dialectica* and they are more evenly spread, with an average of more than two editions a year for more than forty years. Almost four-fifths of the total production is accounted for by six centres: Paris produced 20 editions between 1512 and 1546, Strasbourg 20 between 1512 and 1529, Antwerp 18 between 1516 and 1566, Basel 17 between 1516 and 1567, Cologne 20 between 1522 and 1577, and Lyons 23 between 1530 and 1570. As with Agricola, it seems reasonable to distinguish cities with a regular production from those (here notably Strasbourg) with a large production in a few years, though the figures still do not approach the highest for Agricola in Paris. The second wave of *De copia* printing in Paris (10 editions in the 1530s) coincides with the period in which Agricola was most printed, presumably reflecting the enthusiasm of Latomus and his colleagues for Erasmus. But the striking difference is the smaller impact which Agricola made at such large centres of printing as Basel, Lyons, Strasbourg and

Antwerp (though Antwerp never did much logic printing).



Map 1      Cities which produced editions of *De inventione dialectica*

#### *England and Scotland*

After the letter of Fisher to Erasmus mentioned above, the next English reference to *De inventione dialectica* occurs in the scheme of education proposed in the *Boke named the Governour* (1531), where Sir Thomas Elyot recommends as logic books either Cicero's *Topica* or Agricola's.<sup>54</sup> Eleven copies of *De inventione dialectica* are recorded in the accounts of the Cambridge binder and bookseller Garrett Godfrey, from about 1527-33. This makes it the most frequently mentioned dialectic book, ahead of

<sup>54</sup> T. Elyot, *The Boke Named the Governour* (London, 1531), 30<sup>r</sup>-36<sup>r</sup>.

Caesarius (10 copies), Melanchthon (9) and George of Trebizond (3).<sup>55</sup>

In the statutes which Thomas Cromwell gave Cambridge in 1535, students in arts were to be instructed in the elements of logic, rhetoric, arithmetic, geometry, music and philosophy, and were to read Aristotle, Rudolph Agricola, Philip Melanchthon, George of Trebizond etc. rather than Scotus, Burley etc.<sup>56</sup> John Seton, who was lecturing in logic at Cambridge in the 1530s wrote an introductory book on dialectic, the preface of which suggests that it and Agricola were used before the full Aristotle course.<sup>57</sup> Agricola is also mentioned in the 1551 statutes of Clare Hall<sup>58</sup> and the 1560 statutes of Trinity College.<sup>59</sup>

Several copies of Agricola appear in the lists of books sometimes found in the inventories of the property of members of the University (students and teachers) who died in residence. At Christ's College there are nine lists dated between 1540 and 1551 and in them appear 6 copies of *De inventione dialectica*. At St. John's between 1557 and 1559 seven lists contain 5 copies of Agricola. The lists suggest that Agricola may have been less important at Cambridge after 1560. In all between 1537 and 1608 there are 49 copies. The inventory of the bookbinder Pilgrim in 1545 has 13 Agricolias (4 texts and 9 epitomes), that of Denys in 1578 none, but Denys has 27 copies of Seton, a dialectic produced in England which was originally intended for use with Agricola.<sup>60</sup> Further evidence for the study

<sup>55</sup> E. Leedham-Green ed., *Garrett Godfrey's Accounts c. 1527-1533*, Cambridge Bibliographical Society Monograph no. 12 (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 119-20. By contrast it appears only once in the Oxford day-book of John Dorne, but 1520 is very early in its printing, F. Madan, 'The Daily Ledger of John Dorne', in C. R. L. Fletcher ed., *Collectanea*, I (Oxford, 1885), pp. 73-177 (111).

<sup>56</sup> J. B. Mullinger, *The University of Cambridge*, 2 vols., (Cambridge, 1873-4), I, p. 629, J. K. McConica, *English Humanists and Reformation Politics* (Oxford, 1965), p. 199, D. R. Leader, *A History of Cambridge University*, I (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 332, 335, 336.

<sup>57</sup> J. Seton, *Dialectica* (London, 1545), A2<sup>V</sup> and the way Seton's work complements Agricola's coverage.

<sup>58</sup> *Documents relating to the University and Colleges of Cambridge*, 3 vols, published by the direction of the Commissioners appointed by the Queen (London, 1852), II, pp. 172-173.

<sup>59</sup> J. B. Mullinger, *Cambridge*, II, pp. 595-597.

<sup>60</sup> E. S. Leedham-Green, *Books in Cambridge Inventories*, 2 vols (Cambridge, 1986), II, p. 9. From this list I have discarded Salt 36, Eglesfield 19 and Mote 453 as unlikely to be *De inventione dialectica* (on grounds of recorded entry or of estimated value). 17 copies of Latomus's epitome are recorded (including the 9 in Pilgrim's list mentioned above), 31 copies of Melanchthon's various dialectic books and 36 copies of Ramus's dialectics (of which 17 are in the stocklist of the bookseller Denys). There are 20 copies of Seton outside Denys's list. *Ibid.*, II, pp. 456-7, 539, 652-3, 701. More copies of Agricola than of any other modern dialectician are recorded in these lists. Both in the booklists and in the purchases of individual customers in Godfrey's accounts (n. 55 above) there is a tendency for particular individuals to own a group of humanist dialectic manuals: Caesarius, Melanchthon and Agricola, for example.

of Agricola at Cambridge comes from approving references in the marginal notes by Gabriel Harvey to his copy of Quintilian.<sup>61</sup>

There is only one place in the Oxford statutes where Agricola is mentioned. Sir Thomas White's statutes for the foundation of St John's College in 1555 name Agricola as one of the four authors suggested in dialectic and logic (one of three professorships established). When Queen Mary reduced the authors to three, in 1557, Agricola remained.<sup>62</sup> As at Cambridge, the inventories of property of members of the university dying in residence provide some evidence for the use of Agricola. Between 1555 and 1600, 24 copies of Agricola are recorded in these lists, making him the most frequently mentioned author of dialectic textbooks after Aristotle. Tentative comparisons suggest that between 1560 and 1590 he may have been more important at Oxford than at Cambridge.<sup>63</sup> John Rainolds makes several references to Agricola's views in his lectures on Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, probably delivered in 1572. He assumes that *De inventione dialectica* is in everyone's hands.<sup>64</sup> Details from Agricola appear in two works associated with Oxford, John Sanderson's *Institutionum dialecticarum libri quatuor* (1583) and John Case's *Summa veterum interpretum in universam dialecticam Aristotelis* (1584).<sup>65</sup>

T. W. Baldwin adduces a further piece of evidence for the teaching of Agricola at Oxford from the flying between Nowell and Dorman of 1565-1567. From their charges and replies it appears that Alexander Nowell, as reader in logic at the university, gave public lectures on Agricola about

---

My original work on these booklists (in 1978) was based on Lisa Jardine's transcripts, which she kindly lent me. See also L. Jardine, 'The Place of Dialectic Teaching in Sixteenth-Century Cambridge', *Studies in the Renaissance*, 21 (1974), pp. 31-62.

<sup>61</sup> L. Jardine, 'Distinctive Discipline', in F. Akkerman and A. J. Vanderjagt eds., *Rodolphus Agricola Phrisius* (Leiden, 1988), p. 39.

<sup>62</sup> T. W. Baldwin, *Shakespere's Small Latine and Lesse Greeke*, 2 vols. (Urbana, 1944), I, p. 106, citing and translating *Statutes of the Colleges of Oxford* (1853), III, pp. 49-50. J. McConica ed., *The History of the University of Oxford*, III, *The Collegiate University* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 44, 699, 702, 705. McConica's own essay, 'The Collegiate Society', *ibid.*, pp. 645-732, discusses much new material, especially in the case of Agricola the diary (1572-1574) of Richard and Matthew Carnsew (pp. 697-700).

<sup>63</sup> These calculations are based on transcripts of the booklists made available in the Bodleian Library by the Oxford University Archive. My MPhil. Thesis, *Permeations of Renaissance Dialectic into English Discourse c. 1570-1620*, Warburg Institute 1978, pp. 43-46 gives further statistics from the booklists.

<sup>64</sup> L. D. Green, *John Rainolds's Oxford Lectures on Aristotle's Rhetoric* (Newark, New Jersey, 1986), pp. 145, 171, 179-183, 259-261.

<sup>65</sup> J. Sanderson, *Institutionum dialecticarum libri quatuor* (Antwerp, 1589), K7<sup>r</sup>-L1<sup>v</sup>, J. Case, *Summa veterum interpretum in universam dialecticam Aristotelis* (Frankfurt, 1598), X6<sup>v</sup>-8<sup>v</sup>, C. B. Schmitt, *John Case and Aristotelianism in Renaissance England* (Kingston, Ontario, 1983).

1541. A copy of *De inventione dialectica* appears in an interesting list of largely humanist texts given to Nowell by Thomas Bedell in 1539. The list also includes several works by Erasmus (including *De copia*) and Melanchthon's *Dialectic*.<sup>66</sup> It has been suggested that Agricola was used at the university of St. Andrews, in Scotland, before 1560, but the statutes of the faculty of arts in 1570 stipulate Porphyry and the *Organon*, including at least four books of Aristotle's *Topica*.<sup>67</sup>



Map 2      Universities at which *De inventione dialectica* was taught

<sup>66</sup> T. W. Baldwin, *Shakespere's*, I, pp. 171-175.

<sup>67</sup> J. Durkan, J. Kirk, *The University of Glasgow 1451-1577* (Glasgow, 1977), p. 201, R. K. Hannay, *The Statutes of the Faculty of Arts and the Faculty of Theology at the period of the Reformation*, (St. Andrews, 1910), p. 94.

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

### THE RECEPTION OF *DE INVENTIONE DIALECTICA*

Rudolph Agricola did not found a school. He never circulated or published *De inventione dialectica*. For three years after completing the work he did not even own a copy. Far from urging teachers to adopt the book, or instructing them on its use, he ignored Hegius's suggestions that he should have it printed or that he should produce a shortened version.<sup>1</sup> This puts the work in a rather anomalous position. It evidently is a textbook, but its author did nothing to encourage teachers to use it. In part Agricola's inaction may reflect his own doubts about the stage at which the book would be useful: the reader has to have considerable linguistic competence and breadth of reading, but he or she must not have got to the point where what Agricola can teach is superfluous.<sup>2</sup>

In addition, the subject-matter of the book poses problems for teachers. *De inventione dialectica* aims to teach dialectical invention, the process of planning and developing a composition. Since it combines doctrines from the two established subjects of rhetoric and dialectic, it is hard to place it within either. In medieval and renaissance schools and universities rhetoric was taught before dialectic. Most of the Bachelor of Arts syllabus was given over to a dialectic course which followed the sequence of Aristotle's *Organon*, in which invention is discussed at the end of the sequence (if at all). Agricola was arguing for almost the reverse order when he said that dialectical invention is intellectually prior to both dialectical judgement and the rhetorical doctrine of style. His book demands a reform of the structure of language education, but he did not involve himself in any of the institutional manoeuvres which might have made this possible.

His admirers and those who wished to use his work in university teaching were faced with a problem. Some of them solved the problem by announcing that, splendid though it was, *De inventione dialectica* was simply too advanced for systematic tuition, and recommending it for the

---

<sup>1</sup> See chapter 13, note 4.

<sup>2</sup> *DID*, b<sup>1</sup>v.

private delectation of those who were interested.<sup>3</sup> Others wrote helps to the study of the work, found places for it within the existing syllabus, or embodied some of its principles in more institutionally practical textbooks of their own. Melanchthon and Ramus learnt the lesson that textbook reform and syllabus reform go together. All these approaches can tell us something about how *De inventione dialectica* was used in the early sixteenth century. They are not an exhaustive record, of course, since they are all conditioned by the situation of teaching the *trivium* in the sixteenth century. The private reader may have read in a rather different way, more directed by the text than was possible under the constraints of the syllabus.

Three types of evidence suggest themselves: the teaching aids, the shape of the syllabuses, and the rhetoric and dialectic textbooks of later authors. The commentaries and epitomes suggest how the book was read in the particular classrooms of their authors, and, in the case of really successful items, how they were presented to others for use. Their prefaces and letters of dedication also explain why their authors thought it useful to teach *De inventione dialectica*. I have concentrated on the commentary of Phrissemius (printed 27 times between 1523 and 1559) and the epitome by Latomus (printed 26 times between 1530 and 1600) as the items which achieved the widest circulation. The combined commentary on Alardus's text edited by Joannes Noviomagus, which was printed 10 times between 1539-41 and 1580, is mainly a reduced reprint of Phrissemius's commentary.

#### *Phrissemius's commentary*

Johannes Matthaeus Phrissemius studied first at Leipzig then at Cologne, taking the M.A. there in 1516, and going on to teach in the faculty of arts. He was dean of the faculty of arts in 1522 and 1526, and became a doctor of canon law in 1525. He was chancellor of the city of Cologne between 1525 and 1528. He died in 1532.<sup>4</sup>

Phrissemius's commentary was composed in Cologne in 1523, on the basis of his teaching of *De inventione dialectica* in the *paedagogia* of the university.<sup>5</sup> In his letter to the reader, Phrissemius quotes an overheard

<sup>3</sup> Broadly, this is the position of Erasmus and Melanchthon, see chapters 15 and 16 below.

<sup>4</sup> P. G. Bietenholz ed., *Contemporaries of Erasmus*, III (Toronto, 1987), p. 79.

<sup>5</sup> Some editions subsequent to the Paris (Colines) edition of 1534 mention revisions and corrections to the text and commentary (for example, Huisman nos. 24, 27, 32, 33, 36) but I am unable to say what these revisions are or whether Phrissemius himself carried them out.

remark by a teacher to his pupils that Agricola teaches only what Peter of Spain's fifth tractate covers more simply and cogently. He replies with a justification of Agricola's work. First he shows that the overheard remark is false. There is nothing in Peter of Spain which corresponds to Agricola's third book, all of whose contents - moving, pleasing, disposition, brevity and *copia* for example - are more necessary than suppositions, sophisms and the doctrine of composition and division. Since dialectic is concerned with using language in order to convince an audience, and since what is learnt in school is supposed to help later in professional life, the contents of book three are essential in order for arguments to be presented effectively.<sup>6</sup>

Phrissemius finds that Peter treats none of the subjects of Agricola's second book in a satisfactory way. Peter says nothing at all about exposition, rebutting arguments, the parts of the oration and the use of the topics. For what he says about argumentation you would do better to read Aristotle and Boethius. In the first book Agricola's discussions of the use of the topics, the laws of definition and several of the topics are without parallel in Peter of Spain. Everywhere in Agricola one finds examples from the poets, historians and orators (a3<sup>v</sup>-4<sup>v</sup>). How often he shows the aims of an orator in a speech.

How often he suits the examples to the precepts at one point, the precepts to the examples at the next! How much care he takes everywhere that we will understand the strengths of the authors from the precepts so that, treading in their footsteps again, we can easily make use of the same precepts in similar situations! How clearly and skilfully he teaches the method and means by which we can learn to use language so as to convince, on any matter at all, as the occasion offers and even impromptu.<sup>7</sup>

The argument is directed mainly to showing that Agricola does far more than Peter of Spain. In arguing that Agricola's extra contribution is essential, Phrissemius explains what a dialectic manual ought to contain. He emphasizes that dialectic needs to teach something which will help the

---

<sup>6</sup> R. Agricola, *De inventione dialectica* (Cologne, 1528), Huisman, no. 16, reprinted Hildesheim, 1976, hereafter Phrissemius (1528), a2<sup>r</sup>-3<sup>v</sup>. Subsequent references may be given in the text. While I am discussing Phrissemius, I shall observe his chapter divisions, which are sometimes different from those given in the Alardus (1539) edition from which I normally cite *DID*.

<sup>7</sup> Phrissemius (1528), a4<sup>v</sup>: 'Quoties interim exempla praeceptis, interim rursus praecepta exemplis accommodat! Quanta ubique cura id agit, ut ita ex praeceptis intelligamus virtutes autorum, ut illorum rursus vestigia insistentes, ipsi in similibus rebus commode praeceptis iisdem utamur! Quam accurate, quam diserte hoc docet, qua ratione, quaeque via id consequi liceat, ut ex tempore etiam, et quamvis subito, de re quavis, probabili uti oratione possimus.'

pupils use language persuasively in their lives as adults. His own definition stresses the connection between dialectic and real language,<sup>8</sup> while he praises Agricola for providing teaching which will enable the reader to use dialectic in practical speechmaking or argument (a3<sup>r</sup>-4<sup>r</sup>). He also praises the examples for their value in themselves, for the way they are suited to the precepts, and because they give an idea of how the precepts can be used for the reader's own purposes (a4<sup>v</sup>).

Phrissemius's preoccupation with the need for dialectic to be useful is evident elsewhere in the commentary. Commenting on Agricola's introductory letter, he attacks those who have taught the precepts for thirty years without saying a word about how they are to be used. They can dispute on whether dialectic deals with primary or secondary intentions, whether it is practical or speculative, and whether it is real or rational, but they can say nothing about how it can be used outside the school of dialectic (b3<sup>v</sup>). He returns to the subject of the use of dialectic in commenting on the first chapter of book two. Since dialectic is one of the arts which serves the others, dialectic teachers should avoid aspects of the subject which have no use outside it. They should do three things. First, in place of the numerous arguments against differing positions they should try to make their meaning clear with examples. Second, in reading authors they should point out their use of dialectic. Third, they should propose subjects on which to practice dialectical invention. The teacher should lay down the main lines, the reasoning and the method by which one might speak on either side of the set theme (149-151). It is almost as though declamation is to be introduced into dialectic teaching. Certainly Phrissemius is echoing Quintilian here.

This orientation to the use of language, the insistence on examples, reading and practice, the involvement with practical procedures for teaching, and the connection with the art of declamation, all fit in well with Agricola's purposes.

Phrissemius's comments on the details of the text mostly provide contextual information to assist students. Thus he devotes a good deal of space to attributing quotations, and providing glosses on the names of authors, schools of philosophy, laws, court-cases or events which Agricola refers to. His notes sometimes supply parallel definitions from other

---

<sup>8</sup> Phrissemius (1528), a3<sup>r</sup>: 'At dialectico, hoc est ei qui probabili accurataque de re quavis uti velit oratione, et in umbra ac schola discere ea, quae postea de civilibus causis disserenti aliquem allatura sint fructum.'

authors or point out where Agricola disagrees with them.<sup>9</sup> Sometimes he quotes lengthy passages from Cicero and Virgil which Agricola is discussing.<sup>10</sup> In a few notes he discusses problems in the text, suggesting emendations or reporting readings from a manuscript of Agricola he has seen.<sup>11</sup> His comments on the introductory letter (he is not aware that in his text two letters have become conflated), attempt to place the events they refer to in relation to other things he knows about Agricola's life.<sup>12</sup>

Similarly helpful, though slightly different in kind are Phrissemius's summaries showing how an argument, chapter or section of the book fit together. Thus, for example, in I, iii he collects Agricola's six reasons for rejecting Aristotle's account of the topics; in II, v he summarises the argument about the relationship between dialectic and other subjects; and in II, xiv he sets out the structure of Agricola's discussion of argumentation.<sup>13</sup> Sometimes the issue is not so much summary as paraphrase, as in his discussion of Agricola's definition of topic, where Phrissemius compares the topic to a signpost (9-10). He uses diagrams to show how Agricola divides up the topics, to set out his analysis of the types of question, and to summarise the ways in which an argument can be attacked.<sup>14</sup>

As well as gathering together Agricola's points and providing background knowledge, Phrissemius sometimes provides additional material to assist the reader. For instance, to the chapter on argumentation he adds his own account of induction and example, which includes an attack on Valla's ideas on the subject, as well as quotations from Aristotle and Quintilian on syllogism and enthymeme (255-264). His purpose in adding this material is to set out the diversity of views on this point. Once he has done this he agrees with Agricola's (and Aristotle's) statement of the issue, with the proviso that the differences of terminology should not get in the way of the use of the arguments involved.<sup>15</sup> Elsewhere he adds examples to illustrate arguments from the topics from greater, lesser and equals (included in similars), and from repugnats.<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> Phrissemius (1528), pp. 17, 42, 166, 180-181, 184 (Cicero, frequently *De oratore*); 27-28, 63, 196, 260-261 (Valla); 45, 179 (Aristotle's *Topica*, in Greek).

<sup>10</sup> Phrissemius (1528), pp. 166-169, 240-243, 283.

<sup>11</sup> Phrissemius (1528), pp. 45, 129, 146-147, 282-283 (see chapter 13, n. 14 above), 343.

<sup>12</sup> Phrissemius (1528), b3r.

<sup>13</sup> Phrissemius (1528), pp. 12-14, 16-17, 178-179, 255-257.

<sup>14</sup> Phrissemius (1528), pp. 22, 228, 271.

<sup>15</sup> Phrissemius (1528), pp. 258, 263-264.

<sup>16</sup> Phrissemius (1528), pp. 115-118, 131.

In several places Phrissemius disagrees with Agricola. In some cases he treats the offending passage of the text as a slip of the pen or as an error or inconsistency which would have been removed in revision.<sup>17</sup> More seriously, he thinks Agricola misrepresents Aristotle's views about *differentiae* (37-38). He accuses Agricola of inconsistency in attacking Boethius's topic of antecedents and consequences while elsewhere arguing that a certain amount of duplication among the topics may help with invention (88). He also thinks Agricola misrepresents Boethius's views on repugnats (89, 126). He criticizes Agricola's own views on contraries and repugnats (89, 128, 130). He points out that Agricola was wrong in saying that Aristotle never included maxims, even though he may never have used the word. On the maxims themselves, he agrees with Agricola that they are restrictive of the scope of the topics, and that topics entries should not consist solely of maxims. He understands why Agricola finds Peter of Spain's maxims pointless. However, he thinks that a few maxims may be helpful to beginners in showing them how to use the topics (140). He attacks Agricola's definition of law in book two chapter five (182-183). Twice he suggests that Agricola criticizes Cicero more on the basis of a difference in terminology than out of a real difference of views.<sup>18</sup> None of these criticisms diminishes Phrissemius's respect for Agricola.

For the most part Phrissemius's commentary becomes much thinner as it goes on. Perhaps it is for this reason that he has less to say about the more rhetorical sections of *De inventione dialectica*, or perhaps it is because, as the preface suggests, he agrees with them more and finds less to amplify. In some of the sections on disposition, the kind of summarising and organising Phrissemius offers elsewhere would have been a great help to the reader.

In general the commentary seems sympathetic to Agricola's aims, especially in the emphasis the preface gives to language, usefulness and literature. Even the lengthy commentary on book two chapter fourteen is preoccupied with clarifying difficulties rather than with importing a fuller account of the judgement side of dialectic. Phrissemius does not see unique qualities in Agricola's version of the topics, though he commends the

<sup>17</sup> Phrissemius (1528), pp. 27-28, 56, 86, 129, 194-195.

<sup>18</sup> Phrissemius (1528), pp. 190-191, 211. Presumably it was Phrissemius's commentary which Erasmus criticized in 1528 on the grounds that it contained many unnecessary additions, P. S. Allen et al. ed., *Erasmus Opus Epistolarum*, VII (Oxford, 1928), p. 368 (no. 1978): 'Opus de *Inventione Rhetorica* quidam oneravit commentariis, iuvenis, ut appareat, nec indoctus nec infacundus; sed insunt multa πάρεργα quaedam etiam odiosiora iuveniliterque destomachata. Malim scholia docta et ad rem facientia.' (28 March 1528).

discussion of examples. Where Agricola feels that the maxims have obscured the point of the topics, Phrissemius approves of them, at least as an aid for beginners. There is other evidence to suggest that some, perhaps most, sixteenth-century readers were more comfortable with a briefer and more traditional version of the topics.

*Latomus's epitome*

Bartholomaeus Latomus was born at Arlon in Luxembourg in 1485. In 1516 he took a B.A. at Fribourg, going on to teach in the arts faculty there. In 1522 he was at the siege of Trèves, on which he wrote a poem published in 1524. After that he taught rhetoric at Cologne until 1530, publishing various rhetoric manuals and lecturing on the works of Cicero and Livy. In 1531, after a brief period of teaching at the Trilingual College at Louvain, he went to Paris where he was professor of rhetoric at the Collège de Sainte-Barbe, moving in 1534 to the chair of Latin rhetoric at the Collège Royal. In 1539 he went to Italy for a year. In 1542 he left Paris for Koblenz where he devoted himself to writing against the Protestants.<sup>19</sup>

His epitome of *De inventione dialectica* first appeared in Cologne in 1530, with a dedicatory letter to Henry Olislegerus. The Paris printings, beginning with Gryphius in 1534, carry an entirely different dedication to Andrea de Gouvéa, the principal of Latomus's college.<sup>20</sup> Latomus probably continued to teach *De inventione dialectica* until he left Paris in 1539. Observations from Agricola also appear in his printed commentaries on Cicero's orations and rhetorical works.<sup>21</sup>

Latomus wants people to study Agricola because his kind of dialectic will help people understand what they are reading (primarily literary texts, it would appear). His original preface states that dialectic is a necessary adjunct to literary studies because it helps in the understanding and the treatment of material.<sup>22</sup> Understanding is then explained on the lines of Agricola's instructions for reading.

---

<sup>19</sup> See chapter 13, n. 32 above.

<sup>20</sup> There may well have been an earlier Paris edition, since the new dedicatory letter is dated 1532. When this dedication was reprinted in Cologne, the title page claimed that some revisions had been made for its appearance in Paris. The Basel edition of 1536 proclaims that it has new annotations. (Huisman nos. 19, 25, 8 for the 1532 date on the dedication to Gouvéa - but no. 30, according to Kees Meerhoff, gives a date of 1533.) I have made some comparisons between later editions bearing the Cologne and Paris dedications. The text, though always rewritten to make the Latin more elegant, remains the same in substance.

<sup>21</sup> See notes 82, 91 and 92 below.

<sup>22</sup> B. Latomus, *Epitome Commentariorum dialecticae inventionis Rodolphi Agricolae* (Cologne, 1534), Huisman no. 22, a1<sup>v</sup>-2<sup>r</sup>.

No one who [reads] with certain order and perfect judgement, that is, who can pick out any given question even if it is difficult, contained in a full and intricate speech; who can discern its proofs and arguments and trace them back to their sources, and can observe what each one can do; who can analyse their order and disposition, and the kind of style and can attribute to each the manner and disposition of delivery; no one, I repeat, who truly and wisely knows these things was ever so naturally clear-sighted as to boast that he had achieved this without skill and learning.<sup>23</sup>

The previous age did not read in this way, but engaged in tedious disputes and cavillations. Agricola, 'a man to be compared in fame of letters with antiquity itself', collected and improved on the precepts of Cicero, bringing together in a most useful and fruitful way precepts of law court, school and private thought which had previously been separated.<sup>24</sup>

In abridging the work he has tried to retain the form and the force of the original, while leaving out excrescences and supporting material. With this treatment he hopes that the book can be used profitably even by beginners who have only just finished their studies of grammar. He aims, then, to make an important and useful work easily available to students at an early stage of their studies.<sup>25</sup>

The Paris preface is shorter. It omits the previous criticism of scholastic logic. A new section praises Agricola and explains Latomus's reasons for making an epitome.

This man wrote a work *On Dialectical Invention* which is exact, clear and copious. In this, apart from the teaching and handling of things, which is most suitable, he employed such elegance of language such that in the judgement of the learned he seems to have surpassed all others in this genre. These books are already in everyone's hands, and are so useful that they are lectured on in the schools. But since the author wrote in a way which is too full to be understood quickly by the uneducated, or by those in a hurry, I have shortened them into a compendium, which I have now corrected carefully and published for the use of students.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, a2<sup>v</sup>: 'verum qui certa cum ratione et perfecto iudicio id faciat, hoc est, qui quaestionem quanke, si obscura sit, in ampla et sinuosa oratione complecti, qui probationes eiusdem et argumenta discernere, qui revocare easdem ad fontes suos; et quid quaeque possit perspicere, tum qui ordinem ac dispositionem earum, qui elocutionis formam, qui modum et habitum pronunciationis unicuique tribuere, haec inquam, qui vere ac solerter sciatur, nemo natura atque ingenio tam perspicax fuerit, qui sine arte et doctrina se unquam consecutum fuisse glorietur.'

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, a3<sup>v</sup>: 'vir literarum nomine cum antiquitate ipse conferendus.'

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, a4<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>26</sup> B. Latomus, *Epitome commentariorum dialecticae inventionis Rodolphi Agricolae* (Paris, 1548), Huisman no. 61, a2<sup>r-v</sup>: 'Scripsit enim hic vir *de dialectica inventione* opus exactum plane et copiosum: in quo praeter rerum doctrinam et tractatum, qui commodissimus

As the prefaces suggest, Latomus constructed his epitome mainly by contraction and omission. He prefers to use Agricola's own words. Thus, at the beginning of book one, Latomus preserves the most important definitions of the first chapter, but interpolates some of the explanations and examples from chapter two.<sup>27</sup> The discussion of teaching, moving and pleasing is held over until it is treated more fully in the later books. The second chapter of the epitome is the list of the topics, which appears in chapter four of the original. The epitome leaves out all Agricola's criticisms of his predecessors, whether this involves the omission of a few lines (as when Agricola is discussing different uses of a word) or of an entire chapter (such as the third chapter of book one, which is devoted to considering the views of other authors).

All Agricola's topics are presented in the epitome, but the entries are considerably shortened, which makes them more like the topics entries of Cicero or Quintilian. Each entry contains Agricola's definition of the topic and its main divisions, though under action and subject Latomus provides his own clearer definitions in place of Agricola's reliance on examples. Very few examples are retained (Quintilian's bottleneck and Lucan's Caesar simile are exceptions).<sup>28</sup>

In the second book, his largest, Latomus devotes most space to the chapters on the kinds of question, the multiplication of questions, becoming familiar with the topics, topical reading and the summary of invention.<sup>29</sup> In these chapters, which are among Agricola's most original and most practical, several of the examples, which play a large role in the explanation, are retained.<sup>30</sup> Latomus gives more or less equal attention to argumentation and exposition.

Less space (25 of a total of 118 pages) is devoted to the mainly

---

est, eam orationis elegantiam adhibuit ut eruditorum hominum iudicio cunctos in hoc genere superasse videatur. Atqui hi quidem libri cum iampridem versentur in manibus omnium, ac propter utilitatem in scholis etiam praelegantur: sint autem effusius scripti ab auctore, quam aut ab ignavis aut festinatibus breviter cognosci possint: contractos a me superiore anno in compendium, ac nunc denuo, quo rectius legerentur, non minore cura recognitos, in gratiam studiosorum edendos curavi.' The marginal notes in the Bodleian Library copy of this edition suggest that the annotator had a copy of Phrissemius's commentary to hand.

<sup>27</sup> The inserted passages divide dialectic and explain the use of argument in comparing two things. Latomus, cit. in n. 22, a4<sup>v</sup>-5<sup>v</sup>, *DID*, pp. 7-8.

<sup>28</sup> An idea of the difference is given by the topics whole and parts (*Ibid.*, b1<sup>v</sup>, *DID*, pp. 52-55) or subject (b4<sup>r-v</sup>, *DID*, pp. 75-76). Examples cited: c3<sup>r-v</sup>.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, d1<sup>r</sup>-8<sup>r</sup>, f2<sup>r</sup>-7<sup>r</sup>. That is, chapters 9-14, 26-30 in Alardus's edition.

<sup>30</sup> For example Cato and his wife: d3<sup>r</sup> (*DID*, p. 233), d6<sup>r</sup>-7<sup>v</sup>, f3<sup>r-v</sup>, f6<sup>v</sup>-7<sup>r</sup>; description of a man: f5<sup>r-v</sup>; *Pro Plancio*: d4<sup>v</sup>-5<sup>r</sup>; *Pro Milone*: d5<sup>r</sup> (*DID*, pp. 241-242); Tarquin: f3<sup>v</sup>, f7<sup>r</sup>; Virgil examples: e6<sup>v</sup> (*DID*, p. 292).

rhetorical material of book three. While the most general rules about emotional manipulation and disposition are repeated, the more detailed considerations are often oversimplified or left out. Latomus omits the chapters on pleasing, *copia* and brevity, disputation and practice. In books two and three, he provides occasional diagrams which set out the relationship of the chief subjects of a sequence of chapters.<sup>31</sup>

Latomus's epitome emphasizes the practical side of invention. The topics are reduced to the scale of those of Cicero. In book two most attention is given to the sections which explain the handling of the question, the use of the topics, and the technique of dialectical reading. Latomus was primarily a rhetoric teacher. He uses Agricola as a dialectic which fits in well with rhetoric. He gives much less attention to Agricola's more rhetorical teachings, probably because he intended to supply those elements from more traditional rhetorical sources.

#### *Other commentaries and epitomes*

There are five other commentaries and epitomes. Johannes Visorius's epitome was first printed in Paris in 1534 and reprinted once, in Basel around 1535. It was based on his teaching in Paris at this time.<sup>32</sup> It is appreciably shorter than Latomus's and gives most space to book two.<sup>33</sup> Alardus's epitome of book one was first printed in Cologne in 1538, and reprinted in Paris in 1539 and Lyons in 1542.<sup>34</sup> The commentary of Caspar Rodolphus, who taught at Marburg, was printed at Frankfurt in 1538. Alardus's commentary was only published complete in his revised edition of the text which formed the first volume of the two volume collection of Agricola's works printed by Gymnich in Cologne in 1539. The combined commentary, as has been said, was mainly a reduced reprint of Phrissemius. It contains a few short excerpts from the commentary by Reinardus Hadamarius which is not found elsewhere.<sup>35</sup> In addition, the

<sup>31</sup> For example: d8<sup>r</sup>, f2<sup>r</sup>, f7<sup>v</sup>, g2<sup>r</sup>, g5<sup>r</sup>, h3<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>32</sup> J. Visorius (Le Voyer), *Compendiosa librorum Rodolphi Agricolae de Inventione dialectica Epitome* (Paris, 1534), A1<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>33</sup> Visorius (Huisman no. 23) has 94 sides against Latomus's (Huisman no. 22) 126, but book two has more attention in the ratio 8:5.

<sup>34</sup> Huisman no. 35.

<sup>35</sup> Huisman, nos. 10, 48, 58, 60, 62, 66, 71, 74, 77, 80. R. Agricola, *De inventione dialectica libri omnes integri et recogniti iuxta autographi, nuper D. Alardi Aemstelredami opera in lucem educti fidem, atque docissimis scholiis illustrati Ioannis Phrissemii Alardi Aemstelredami Reinardi Hadamarii* (Cologne, 1552). I reached this conclusion on the basis of checking the following chapters (Alardus's numbers) Book I: introductory letter, chapters 1-3, 20; Book II: chapters 14, 18-20, 25-27; Book III: chapters 3-5.

Italian translation by Orazio Toscanella, printed in Venice in 1567, is accompanied by new diagrams which summarise the contents of each chapter in the manner of a commentary or an epitome.<sup>36</sup>

The other commentaries and epitomes take their lead from Phrissemius. Rodolphus is quite open about this, but Visorius (Jean le Voyer) and Alardus also often support Phrissemius in his criticisms of Agricola.<sup>37</sup> Two of them copy Phrissemius's summary diagrams.<sup>38</sup> All the epitomes present very condensed versions of the topics, generally restricting themselves to a few definitions, though Alardus's epitome and his commentary give new examples of arguments derived from each topic.<sup>39</sup> Apart from Alardus's commentary, all are very brief in their accounts of the subject-matter of book three. Like Latomus, Visorius gives special attention to the parts of book two which help in invention and he includes several of the examples.<sup>40</sup> He and Rodolphus both follow Phrissemius in saying more than Latomus about argumentation.<sup>41</sup>

In the preface to his commentary, Alardus takes dialectical invention very seriously as a separate subject.<sup>42</sup> He treats the work as part of a programme of humanist study which involves other textbooks and close scrutiny of Cicero's speeches.<sup>43</sup> In the commentary he supplies many references to neoLatin writers, especially Valla and Erasmus, and to Greek authors.<sup>44</sup> Alardus makes more comments on Agricola's style and his use of

<sup>36</sup> R. Agricola, *Della invention dialettica*, trans. O. Toscanella (Venice, 1567), Huisman, no. 76.

<sup>37</sup> C. Rodolphus, *In Rodolphi Agricolae De Inventione Dialectica...scholia* (Frankfurt, 1538), A2<sup>r</sup>-V, B2<sup>r</sup>, D3<sup>V</sup>, E3<sup>r</sup>, Visorius, C3<sup>V</sup>-4<sup>V</sup>, c7<sup>v</sup>, e1<sup>V</sup>-2<sup>V</sup>, *DID*, pp. 177, 224, 47 but Alardus also criticises Phrissemius, a3<sup>r</sup>, pp. 461, 59-60, 215-220, Phrissemius (1528), pp. 43, 182-183.

<sup>38</sup> C. Rodolphus, B2<sup>r</sup>, D3<sup>V</sup>, E3<sup>r</sup>, *DID*, p. 25.

<sup>39</sup> Alardus, *Epitome primi libri de Inventione dialectica Rudolphi Agricolae* (Paris, 1539), after a two sentence explanation, the topic genus is supplied with examples from *Tusculan Disputations* and *De Oratore*, A5<sup>r</sup>-V, Agricola's important examples are repeated under cause and effect, but Alardus adds a quotation from Cicero's *Seventh Phillipic*, B3<sup>r</sup>-4<sup>V</sup>.

<sup>40</sup> Latomus, cit. in n. 22, C8<sup>V</sup>, D3<sup>V</sup>.

<sup>41</sup> Rodolphus, G1<sup>V</sup>, G2<sup>V</sup>, Latomus, C1<sup>r</sup>, C3<sup>r</sup>-4<sup>V</sup>, C7<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>42</sup> *DID*, a2<sup>V</sup>: 'Hoc sine ulla dubitatione confirmantes, inter omnia studiorum genera quae, vel publice vel privatim perquam necessaria sunt, nihil esse prius Inventione dialectica'; a2<sup>r</sup>: 'Haec vero dum Inventionis depromit doctrinam literariorumque donorum abundantiam adserit'; a3r: 'In his enim quae praefleguntur aut disputantur in Academias, medicina, iurisperitia, et theologia pertractatur, in cognitione vero inventionis dialecticae aliis opus est praefectionibus, aliis dissertationibus.'

<sup>43</sup> *DID*, a3<sup>V</sup>, a4<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>44</sup> For example: Erasmus *DID*, pp. 21, 30, 35-36, 46 etc.; Jerome *DID*, pp. 46-47, 67, 73, 77; Homer *DID*, pp. 51, 81, 95, 152; Valla *DID*, pp. 21, 47, 51, 60, 69 etc.

language than Phrissemius.<sup>45</sup> He also provides references for rhetorical points, such as *color* and *affectus*.<sup>46</sup> Some of his comments amplify Agricola's rather brief treatment of epideictic.<sup>47</sup> Unexpectedly he gives a short account of supposition.<sup>48</sup> Nevertheless, like Phrissemius, he gives most attention to the topics and their applications, and to the dialectical sections of book two. He adds Agricola's treatise on universals near the beginning and his instructive analysis of *Pro lege Manilia*, which reflects his teaching on dialectical reading, at the end. He also provides an extra section in which the attributes of things and persons (the special topics) are exemplified and are shown to derive from the topics.<sup>49</sup>

#### *De inventione dialectica* within the university syllabus

In some university syllabuses or projects for reform, Agricola merely stands, usually among his colleagues, for humanist dialectic and against the dialectic of the scholastics. In this category I would place the Cambridge statutes of 1535, the attempted reform of Vienna of 1537, and the St John's College, Oxford statutes of 1555.<sup>50</sup> In those cases in which the arrangement of the texts tells us something about the programme of teaching, *De inventione dialectica* usually appears in one of five roles: as a rhetoric text, as an introduction to dialectic, as a substitute for Aristotle's *Topica*, as an introduction to the topics, or as the dialectical component of a programme emphasizing literature.

##### 1. As a rhetoric text: Mainz 1523

In 1523, the University of Mainz established two *bursae* for students in the arts faculty to replace the two colleges which had formerly belonged to the nominalists and the realists. They both had the same lecture programme:

5 am Porphyry, *Isagoge*, Aristotle, *Organon* (2 year course)

7 am Historian at the choice of the master of the house

<sup>45</sup> *DID*, pp. 3, 183.

<sup>46</sup> *DID*, pp. 380-381, (384-385).

<sup>47</sup> *DID*, pp. 239, 246-247, 261, 439.

<sup>48</sup> *DID*, p. 35.

<sup>49</sup> *DID*, pp. 37-41; 461-471; 52, 74, 319-352.

<sup>50</sup> J. B. Mullinger, *The University of Cambridge*, 2 vols., (Cambridge, 1873-4), I, p. 629. R. King, *Geschichte der Kaiserlichen Universität zu Wien*, Bd 2, (Vienna, 1854), p. 356: 'Dialecticus, soll lesen Dialecticam Rodolphi agricole. Laurentii Valle. Angeli Politiani. Ciceronis Topica, Porphirii Voces cum Interpretatione Amonii. Item Aristotelis Peri erminijnas, Categorias, Anticategorias et Analytica. Unnder Weillen auch Priora et Posteriora Aristotelis.' T. W. Baldwin, *Shakespere's Small Latine and Lesse Greeke*, 2 vols, (Urbana, 1944), I, p. 106, citing and translating *Statutes of the Colleges of Oxford* (1853), III, pp. 49-50.

8 am Caesarius, *Dialectica*

12 Virgil or another chaste poet

1pm Physics for B.A.s

3pm Greek reading

4pm Wednesday and Friday: Disputation on grammar, dialectic or physics. Other weekdays: Quintilian books 1-3, or *Ad Herennium*, *De officiis* or *De oratore* or Rudolph Agricola's *Topica*.

Attached to each *bursa* was a school at which grammar, the elements of poetry, easy authors and an introduction to dialectic were provided.<sup>51</sup> Even given this preparation, the timetable above seems far too heavy. Presumably each year group took a selection of these courses.

Whichever year studied him, it would seem that Agricola is mentioned as an alternative textbook in the area of rhetoric. The works of Cicero and the books of Quintilian chosen suggest that the course of rhetoric proposed is more reflective about issues and ethics than practical and technical, though *Rhetorica ad Herennium* is also there for the coverage of basic content. Since Agricola himself referred to *De inventione dialectica* as his topics, the use of the term here may be no more than descriptive. Or it may suggest that the work is to be considered parallel to, or replacing, the topics of Aristotle or Cicero. The main dialectic course here consists of Caesarius as an introduction to the two year course on Porphyry and Aristotle, which is supplemented by disputationes.

2. *Introduction to dialectic: Tübingen 1525-1531, Vienna 1554, Ingolstadt 1560-61, 1572*

At Tübingen the *Ordinatio regis Ferdinandi* of 1525 mentioned Agricola and George of Trebizond as possible alternatives to Peter of Spain, in the role of introduction to dialectic.<sup>52</sup> A visitation of 16 August 1531 discovered that the *moderni* were reading Agricola, while the realists were using Peter of Spain. On 8 September 1531, all were ordered to read Peter of Spain.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Fritz Herrman, 'Die Mainzer Bursen "Zum Algesheimer" und "Zum Schenkenberg" und ihre Statuten', *Archiv für Hessische Geschichte*, new series, 5 (1907), pp. 94-124 (pp. 102-103).

<sup>52</sup> R. von Roth ed., *Urkunden zur Geschichte der Universität Tübingen aus den Jahren 1476-1550* (Tübingen, 1877, repr. Aalen, 1973), pp. 141-153, p. 148: '...legant et doceant praedicamentorum Paraphrasim et Epithomata sive parva Logicalia Fabri vel Petri Hispani textum, aut si hunc quoque fastidiant Auditores, Rodolphum Agricolam vel Trapezuntium meliori ordine et clariori Interpretatione ad Auditorum profectum'.

<sup>53</sup> W. Teufel, *Universitas Studii Tuingensis* (Tübingen, 1977), p. 80, J. Haller, *Die Anfänge der Universität Tübingen 1477-1537*, I, (Stuttgart, 1927), pp. 315-316. Perhaps it is surprising that the *moderni* should have read Agricola, in view of his realist assumptions.

A project for the reform of the University of Vienna of 1554, which the statute book suggests was actually carried out, provides for a complex structure in which thirteen lecturers (a grammar teacher for each of the three ancient languages, two dialecticians, a rhetorician, a lecturer on history and poetics, three mathematicians, two natural philosophers, and a moral philosopher) are disposed in two years of B.A. and two years of M.A.<sup>54</sup> In this scheme one dialectician provides an introduction in the first year of the B.A. 'He shall lecture on and complete the dialectics of Caesarius, George of Trebizond, Rudolph Agricola or George Pachimerius and shall illustrate the precepts of dialectic with examples drawn from natural philosophy or moral philosophy'.<sup>55</sup> A different professor lectures on the whole *Organon* over two years in the M.A. That his coverage of *Topica* and *Posterior Analytics* was rather sketchy is suggested by the fact that in the first year he would only reach the end of *De interpretatione*.<sup>56</sup>

In this scheme, Agricola is one of four alternatives as an introduction to dialectic, a role to which his work on its own is not particularly well suited. It would seem more reasonable to teach it in combination with one of the others. The inclusion of Agricola may be intended to make up for the sketchy coverage of Aristotle's topics. Alternatively he may be there as a famous name, or as an opportunity for lecturers who favoured a strongly humanist approach to dialectic.

A report on the arts faculty of Ingolstadt in 1560/61 notes that the sixth professor teaches dialectic, first Caesarius, then Agricola, and finally the *Organon* of Aristotle. Later in the same document it is stated that B.A. candidates are examined on their knowledge of Agricola's *De inventione dialectica*.<sup>57</sup> At Ingolstadt in 1572, it was thought necessary to supplement the initial teaching offered by the Jesuits with a course on a compendium of

<sup>54</sup> R. King, *Geschichte der Universität zu Wien*, II, pp. 380-384. Certain lectures (the third mathematician, ethics and politics, literature and poetics, Greek and Hebrew) seem to fall outside the four year scheme from the point of view of the timetable. They may have been optional, or further, studies.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 380: 'Dialecticus mane hora octava legat et finiat Joannis Cesarei, Georgii Trapezuntii, Rudolphi Agricolae vel Georgii Pachimerii Dialecticam, atque eiusdem pracepta exemplis ex Physica vel morali Philosophia desumptis illustrat.'

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 381: 'Organi Aristotelici Professor hora nona ante meridiem legat primo anno *Organum* Aristotelis usque ad finem *peri herminias*. Secundo vero anno *priora et posteriora, Topica et Elenchos* Aristotelis.'

<sup>57</sup> A. Seifert, *Die Universität Ingolstadt im 15. und 16. Jahrhundert*, (Berlin, 1973), p. 202, under the rubric 'tot esse solent lectores': 'Sextus Professor qui dialecticam continuo doceat, primo Caesarii, deinde Rudolphi Agricolae, praeterea *Organum* Aristotelis, sive alternativam haec, sive ordine unum post aliud, id ex fructu auditorum metiendum videtur'; p. 204: 'in dialectices examine cognitionem Rodolphi *De Inventione*'.

dialectic like Caesarius, Agricola or [Fonseca].<sup>58</sup> In these cases Caesarius and Agricola together (not an entirely harmonious pairing but found elsewhere as well) or separately, seem to be used as an introductory course in dialectic, in preparation for the *Organon*. Presumably if Agricola was used alone as an introduction to dialectic, the teacher must have supplied a considerable amount of additional material (for example predicates, categories, forms of the syllogism).

*3.A Substitute for Aristotle's Topica: Cologne 1560-1, 1561-2, 1577-8, Clare Hall, Cambridge 1551, Louvain*

In a Cologne lecture course in the first semester of 1560-1, under logic (the third highest class) one lecturer covers Porphyry, the *Categories*, *De interpretatione*, and the *Ethics*, the other Rudolph Agricola and disputations.<sup>59</sup> In the following semester the first lecturer covers *De interpretatione* and *Posterior Analytics*, the other *Prior Analytics* and *Sophistical Refutations*.<sup>60</sup> This suggests a two semester cycle in which Agricola replaces *Topica*. In 1561-2, the lecturers covered the whole *Organon* (with Agricola in place of *Topica*) in one semester.<sup>61</sup> The catalogue of lectures of the college at Cologne in 1577-8 lists lectures for various times of day in each of seven subjects (Metaphysics, Physics, Logic, Rhetoric, Humanity, Syntax and Etymology).<sup>62</sup> These form a seven year course in arts leading up to metaphysics. The rhetoric course, which, like its predecessors etymology, syntax and humanity, is preparatory, includes intermediate Greek (Greek was begun in the humanity class) and an introduction to logic 'drawn from Hunnaeus's *Dialectica*'.<sup>63</sup> In the logic course, the 6 a.m. lecture covers *Isagoge*, *Categories*, *De interpretatione*, and *Posterior Analytics*, the 1 p.m. lecture *Prior Analytics*, 'the places of Rudolph instead of *Topica*', and *Sophistical Refutations*.<sup>64</sup> The remaining two times (9 a.m. and 4 p.m.) are used for repetitions, and sometimes disputations. The syllabus makes it quite plain that Agricola is used in place of Aristotle's *Topica* in the main dialectic course. In the corresponding list for 1578-9, the place between *Prior Analytics* and *Sophistical Refutations* is filled by a compendium of topics, presumably not Agricola, though perhaps

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 308.

<sup>59</sup> L. Lukacs ed., *Monumenta Paedagogica Societatis Iesu*, III (Rome, 1974), p. 542.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 545. In this semester the rhetoric class studied Hunnaeus as an introduction to dialectic.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 548.

<sup>62</sup> F. J. Bianco, *Die alte Universität Köln* (Cologne, 1855), pp. 322-324.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 323: 'Introductio ad Logicam tradetur ex *Dialectica Hunaei*.'

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 323: 'Prior Analytica Aristotelis, loci Rodolphi pro topicis, deinde Elenchi.'

a book indebted to him.<sup>65</sup> There is also a record of an examination at Cologne in 1557 on Agricola and *Sophistical Refutations*. Since the previous day's examination covered the *Organon* from Porphyry to *Posterior Analytics*, Agricola seems to be replacing Aristotle's *Topica* here too.<sup>66</sup> Other Cologne documents also show Agricola's dialectic being taught alongside Aristotle's.<sup>67</sup>

The 1551 statutes of Clare Hall, Cambridge provide for six lecturers, of whom four teach dialectic and philosophy. The first will teach Aristotle's *Physics*, books from the *Parva naturalia*, or *De anima*, the second his *Topica*, *Analytics*, or *Sophistical Refutations*, Sturm's *Dialecticae partitiones* or Agricola's *De inventione*, the third *Isagoge*, *Categories* or *De interpretatione*, and the fourth an introduction which will prepare the class for Aristotle.<sup>68</sup> In this scheme Agricola may stand for advanced dialectic or, which seems more likely, in place of Aristotle's *Topica*.

An attempted reform of the university of Vienna of 1537, which otherwise names so many texts that some of them must be alternatives, may also imply this substitution, since Agricola is mentioned and Aristotle's *Topica* is omitted.<sup>69</sup>

The Louvain arts faculty commentary on the *Organon* (which was probably composed in 1535, and which continued to be printed until 1568) suggests a way in which *De inventione dialectica* might have been used in conjunction with Aristotle's *Topica*. Agricola is cited as an authority on the definition, subject-matter and use of dialectic, on the origin of the topics and on individual topics.<sup>70</sup> A topics list is provided which attempts to assimilate Aristotle's *Topica* to the method of Cicero, Boethius and Agricola.<sup>71</sup> In addition small tractates on definition and division, hypothetical syllogism and the handling of arguments, questions and topics are inserted into the sequence of the *Organon*.<sup>72</sup> Agricola's attacks on

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 325.

<sup>66</sup> L. Lukacs ed., *Monumenta Paedagogica*, III, p. 603: '4 idus ab 8 usque ad medium duodecimae examinati sunt in Rodolpho et Elenchis sophisticis Aristotelis.'

<sup>67</sup> F. J. Bianco, cit., *Analgen*, p. 323; p. 409: 'et quaedam magis necessaria ex Topicis, vel eorum loco Rodolphi liber primus.'

<sup>68</sup> *Documents relating to the University and Colleges of Cambridge*, 3 vols, published by the direction of the Commissioners appointed by the Queen (London, 1852), II, pp. 172-173.

<sup>69</sup> See note 50 above.

<sup>70</sup> Louvain Arts Faculty, *Commentaria in Isagogen Porphyrii et in omnes libros Aristotelis de dialectica* (Louvain, 1568), B1<sup>r-v</sup>, Ff4<sup>v-5<sup>v</sup>, Kk6<sup>r</sup>, K3<sup>v-4<sup>r</sup>, Ii5<sup>v</sup>, Mm2<sup>v-3<sup>r</sup> and many others. Further information on this work at chapter 13, n. 47 above.</sup></sup></sup>

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, Kk1<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, K3<sup>r-4<sup>r</sup>, X5<sup>v-6<sup>v</sup>, Kk2<sup>v-4<sup>r</sup>.</sup></sup></sup>

Aristotle's topics and his definition of question are rebutted.<sup>73</sup>

*4. Introduction to the Topics: Trinity, Cambridge 1560*

The statutes for Trinity College for 1560 establish that of nine lecturers, five will teach dialectic, the other four introduction to Greek, Greek literature, Latin (mostly Cicero) and mathematics.<sup>74</sup> Of the five dialecticians the chief will lecture on one of Aristotle's works of natural philosophy, the first sublecturer his *Topica*, the second Rudolph Agricola's *De inventione* or the *Sophistical Refutations*, the third Porphyry's *Isagoge*, the *Categories* or *De interpretatione*, and the fourth an introduction to dialectic.<sup>75</sup> The 1552 Trinity statutes had been organised according to books to be studied and had stipulated simply Aristotle's logic.<sup>76</sup> The 1560 statutes suggest an increase in Agricola's importance, with (if we assume that all the alternatives were taught in a cycle) *De inventione dialectica* used as a preparation for Aristotle's *Topica*.

*5. The dialectic component of a literature course: Tübingen 1557, The Boke Named the Governor 1531*

A Tübingen syllabus of 1557 for the *paedagogia*, the preparatory colleges run by the university, outlines a four year course with a strong emphasis on ancient languages and literature.

1. Latin grammar, Melanchthon, *Grammatica maior*, Cicero, *De amicitia*, *De senectute*, Virgil, *Bucolica*, Terence, *Comedies*, Introduction to Greek through Melanchthon.
2. Further Latin grammar, Linacre's grammar, Cicero, *De officiis*, *Pro Archia poeta*, *Pro Marcello*, *Pro lege Manilia*, *Pro Deiotaro* and selected letters.
3. Introduction to dialectic and rhetoric through Melanchthon, speeches and letters of Cicero, Virgil, Greek grammar.
4. Aristotle, *Organon*, or Agricola, *De inventione dialectica*, lectures on rhetoric, Greek literature or Virgil.

In this scheme Agricola's work is put forward as an alternative to

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, Hh3<sup>v</sup>-4<sup>r</sup>, 6<sup>r</sup>, Kk2<sup>v</sup>-3<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>74</sup> J. G. Mullinger, *Cambridge*, II, pp. 595-597.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, II, pp. 595-597: 'Primus legat *Topica* Aristotelis; secundus exponat vel Rodolphum Agricolam *de Inventione*, vel librum *de Elenchis* Aristotelis, vel libros qui *Analyticci* dicuntur; tertius *Praedicabilia* Porphyrii, vel *Praedicamenta* Aristotelis, vel libros *De Interpretatione* eiusdem autoris, prout classis ipsius postulat; quartus et infimus interpretetur dialecticae introductionem, sic ut classis infima commoda introductione informata, veniat ad Porphyrium et Aristotelem paratior.' The way the last sentence refers back suggests that Agricola is thought of as part of Aristotle.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, II, pp. 614-616.

Aristotle's within a context in which many literary texts are taught. Although the texts were probably included largely as examples for the teaching of the Latin language and the principles of rhetoric, even so this context of rhetorical theory combined with literary examples seems to fit in with certain aspects of Agricola's work. Here perhaps the *Organon* and *De inventione dialectica* might be real alternatives, leading in rather different directions. Also in 1557 *De inventione dialectica* and the *Organon* are suggested as alternatives for common lectures in the university (probably with a deeper study of Aristotle to follow for the M.A. students). In spite of this, although the records name several lecturers in relation to the other texts, there is no record of anyone being paid to teach *De inventione dialectica* under one of these headings.<sup>77</sup>

In the scheme of education proposed in his *Boke named the Governour* (1531), Sir Thomas Elyot recommends as logic books either Cicero's *Topica* or Agricola's. In his somewhat idealised model of schooling, the nobleman will begin by learning a few precepts of Latin and Greek grammar, moving swiftly on to authors: Aesop, Lucian, Homer, Virgil, Horace, Silius, Lucan and Hesiod. After the poets the nobleman may study the part of logic called *Topica* for half a year from Cicero or Agricola. Then he should pass on to rhetoric: Quintilian, Hermogenes or *Partitiones oratoriae*, or perhaps using *De copia* instead.<sup>78</sup> Model texts for oratory, history and ethics follow. Elyot's plan is for a distinctively literary education, with Agricola or Cicero's *Topica* being used as the only part of dialectic to appear, in preparation for a more thorough study of rhetoric.

The differences between these five possibilities are rather striking. Taken together they show the difficulty faced by anyone attempting to place the work within the established structure of the *trivium*. Some of these schemes are harder to envisage than others. *De inventione dialectica* would have needed a lot of supplementation if it was to be an introduction to dialectic, but it might well have led to a rather interesting attitude to the rest of dialectic. In the same way, in considering the work as a replacement for Aristotle's *Topica*, one can imagine readings in which its use is merely absurd, and also readings in which it displaces and reinterprets traditional teaching in dialectic. In most of these syllabuses, though, *De inventione dialectica* appears rather late, after the whole of rhetoric and in some cases

---

<sup>77</sup> N. Hofmann, *Die Artisten Facultät an der Universität Tübingen 1534-1601* (Tübingen, 1982), pp. 114, 123-124, 245.

<sup>78</sup> T. Elyot, *The Boke Named the Governour* (London, 1531), 30<sup>r</sup>-36<sup>r</sup>.

large parts of dialectic, in comparison with Agricola's ideal image of dialectical invention as the thinking part of composition, after grammar but prior to judgement and style. In all these courses too, the fact of the institutional division between rhetoric and dialectic works against Agricola's attempt to bring the contents of the two subjects together.

*Uses of De inventione dialectica in other textbooks*

*De inventione dialectica* is cited or referred to sufficiently often for one to believe that it was required reading for all but the most traditional authors of dialectic books in northern Europe, from the 1520s almost to the end of the sixteenth century. However, those who use it tend to borrow only a few details. Very few rhetoric books use it at all.

Most citations of Agricola in other textbooks refer to his treatment of the topics. But as elsewhere the tendency is for authors to use his ideas under a few particular topics entries rather than taking over his new version of the topics to any substantial degree. Only Latomus, John Seton and Thomas Wilson take over Agricola's list of topics complete. But Latomus gives much more Ciceronian topics entries, Seton lists them because he expects his students to use Agricola's work alongside his own, while Wilson builds up the individual topics entries more from Cicero and Boethius than from Agricola.<sup>79</sup>

Many authors include in their lists topics which Agricola had been the first to name.<sup>80</sup> In the same way particular details, such as definitions, distinctions and examples, from his entries for individual topics occur quite frequently overall, but rarely does a given author cite many of them. An exception here is Visorius, who wrote an epitome of *De inventione dialectica*. He includes details from it in his introduction to dialectic under definition, etymology, genus, similitude, opposite, adjunct, cause, effect,

<sup>79</sup> B. Latomus, *Summa totius rationis disserendi* (Cologne 1527), 4r. J. Seton, *Dialectica* (London, 1545), STC 22250, A2<sup>r-v</sup>, G2<sup>v-4v</sup>. The new STC lists nineteen editions, many more than were previously known. T. Wilson, *The Rule of Reason*, ed. R. S. Sprague (Northridge, Calif., 1972), (based on the edition of 1553), pp. 91, 93-96, 100-102, 105-108, 113, 124. Sprague lists 6 editions between 1551 and 1580. W. S. Howell, *Logic and Rhetoric in England 1500-1700* (Princeton, 1956), surveys the English language texts but some of his estimates (for example he consistently calls Agricola's book a scholastic dialectic) need correction. See also J. R. McNally, 'Prima pars dialecticae: The Influence of Agricolan Dialectic Upon English Accounts of Invention', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 21 (1968), pp. 166-177. Herman Welsdalius prints Agricola's list of topics in his commentary on Caesarius's *Dialectica*. H. Welsdalius, *Scholia in dialecticam Ioannis Caesarii* (Cologne, 1559), H7<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>80</sup> Among them authors mentioned elsewhere in this chapter or in chapter 18: Cantiuncula, Latomus, Ringelbergius, Bucoldianus, Valerius, Sanderson, Case, Bersman, and Libavius.

and comparison, as well as repeating Agricola's definition of topic.<sup>81</sup> Details from Agricola occur in other versions particularly under the following topics: definition, *differentia*, adjacent, action, subject, conjugates, causes, effects, similitudes, comparisons, and antecedents, consequents and repugnats (in this last case because he rejected the topic). Aspects of Agricola's discussions of the use of the topics are cited by Cantiuncula, Ringelbergius, Willichius, Wilson, Sanderson, and Case, and in the commentaries on Cicero's *Topica* by Visorius, Latomus and Hegendorff.<sup>82</sup>

Outside the topics Agricola is much less often cited, and even where he is cited he is sometimes not followed. His definition of dialectic is quoted by Hegendorff, Wilson and Valerius.<sup>83</sup> His version of status theory is referred to (under invention) in Welsdalius's commentary on Caesarius's *Dialectica*.<sup>84</sup> Agricola's opinion that the question is the subject-matter of dialectic is repeated by Hotman (who refers to Cicero's expression of this view) and Bersman.<sup>85</sup> Willichius cites Agricola's terminology for the parts of the syllogism.<sup>86</sup> But really this amounts to very little. In this context, though, one should also recall the reprinting of the chapters on dialectical reading in the Melanchthon-inspired statutes for Helmstedt.<sup>87</sup> Agricola's practice of dialectical reading is also picked up in Omphalius's use of his *Pro lege Manilia* commentary in his own version, and by Melanchthon and Ramus.<sup>88</sup>

There are also references to Agricola and praises of his work in manuals which base their teaching entirely on Aristotle and Boethius. The frequently

<sup>81</sup> J. Visorius, *Ingeniosa nec minus elegans ad dialectices candidatos methodus* (Paris, 1534), A5<sup>V</sup>-6<sup>V</sup>, 8<sup>r</sup>, B1<sup>r</sup>, 3<sup>r</sup>, 4<sup>r</sup>, 5<sup>r</sup>-6<sup>V</sup>.

<sup>82</sup> C. Cantiuncula, *Topica* (Basel, 1520), A2<sup>V</sup>-3<sup>r</sup>, 4<sup>r</sup>-V, J. Ringelbergius, *Lucubrationes* (Basel, 1541, repr. Nieuwkoop, 1967), pp. 238-9, Willichius, *Erotematum dialectices libri tres* (Strasburg, 1560), F3<sup>V</sup>-F4<sup>r</sup>, G1<sup>r</sup>, T. Wilson, *The Rule of Reason*, ed. cit., pp. 90, 135-152, J. Sanderson, *Institutionum dialecticarum libri quatuor* (Antwerp, 1589), K6<sup>r</sup>, L7<sup>r</sup>-8<sup>V</sup>, J. Case, *Summa veterum interpretum in universam dialecticam Aristotelis* (London, 1584), Ee1, Cicero, *Topica*, with commentaries (Paris, T. David, 1550), c2<sup>V</sup>-3<sup>r</sup>, c1<sup>r</sup>, d2<sup>r</sup>, v2<sup>V</sup>.

<sup>83</sup> C. Hegendorff, *Libri dialecticae legalis quinque* (Paris, 1535), a5<sup>r</sup>, T. Wilson, *The Rule of Reason*, ed. cit., p. 8, Valerius, *Tabulae* (Antwerp, 1582), A4<sup>r</sup>. Risse lists 18 editions of Valerius between 1551 and 1596.

<sup>84</sup> H. Welsdalius, *Scholia in dialecticam Ioannis Caesarii* (Cologne, 1559), H7<sup>r</sup>. (Referring to *De inventione dialectica*, II, 6.)

<sup>85</sup> F. Hotman, *Institutionis dialecticae libri IV*, in *Opera* (Lyons, 1599), I, 1131A, G. Bersman, *Erotemata dialectices* (n.p. 1602), B1v. This is also a view found in Melanchthon and his followers, CR 20, 711, CR 13, 515, 517, Valerius, *Tabulae* (Antwerp, 1582), A4<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>86</sup> Willichius, *Erotematum Dialectices libri tres* (Strasburg, 1560), L1<sup>r</sup>-V.

<sup>87</sup> See chapter 13, note 46 above.

<sup>88</sup> See chapter 11, note 18 above and chapters 15 and 16 below.

printed dialectics of Caesarius and Titelmans will do as examples.<sup>89</sup>

On the rhetorical side there are fewer details to report. Bucoldianus's *De inventione et amplificatione oratoria* (1534) follows Agricola when he explains that the topics are useful in producing amplification and emotional persuasion as well as arguments.<sup>90</sup> Latomus too cites this opinion in his commentary on Cicero's *Partitiones oratoriae*, based on lectures given in Paris in the 1530s. This work also records Agricola's views on the relationship between thesis and hypothesis, on the disposition of questions, and on disposition generally.<sup>91</sup> Latomus's *Summa totius rationis disserendi* (1527) uses Agricola's division of dialectic into subject-matter, instrument and handling, and refers to Agricola on questions, emotions, *copia* and disposition.<sup>92</sup> In his Oxford lectures (?1572) on Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, John Rainolds cites and supports Agricola's views that arguments and emotions and teaching and moving are connected, and that the subject of dialectic is anything which can be put in the form of a question. He also agrees with him on the importance of the topics, and in rejecting Aristotle's distinction between demonstration and dialectic.<sup>93</sup> Some elements of Cyprian Soarez's *De arte rhetorica* (1562), which was often reprinted and which became the official rhetoric manual of the Jesuits, reflect Agricola's teaching.<sup>94</sup> Soarez places the topics first, explains that they provide material for moving audiences, regards the question as the subject-matter of rhetoric, and shows how general issues are implied in particular cases.<sup>95</sup> Much of his language

<sup>89</sup> Caesarius, *Dialectica* (Cologne, ?1525), (BL copy 520db(2)), Aa1<sup>V</sup>, Aa3<sup>V-4<sup>R</sup></sup>; *Dialectica* (Cologne, 1558), A3<sup>r</sup>, A4<sup>r</sup>, A6<sup>V</sup>, A8<sup>V</sup>. By combining Risse, *National Union Catalog* and *Index Aureliensis*, one can identify 73 editions of this work in the sixteenth century, mostly in the 1530s (17 editions), 1540s (22), 1550s (16), and 1560s (9), mostly from Cologne (18 editions), Lyons (14), Venice (10), Mainz (9), Cracow (7), Paris (6), and Leipzig (6). More details in my thesis, pp. 312-314, 493. F. Titelmans, *Dialecticae considerationis libri sex* (Paris, 1579), a8<sup>r-v</sup>, b4<sup>r</sup>, 7<sup>V</sup>, x2<sup>r-v</sup>. Risse lists 36 editions of Titelmans between 1533 and 1596.

<sup>90</sup> G. Bucoldianus, *De inventione et amplificatione oratoria* (Lyons, 1534), 5<sup>r-v</sup>, pp. 5-6, 105, 171, 191-194.

<sup>91</sup> Cicero, *De partitionibus oratoris dialogus* (with the commentaries of Strebaeus, Latomus and Hegendorff, and with Sturm's dialogue) (Paris, 1550), pp. 10, 15, 19-20, 28, 32.

<sup>92</sup> B. Latomus, *Summa totius rationis disserendi* (Cologne, 1527), 3<sup>r</sup>, D7<sup>r-v</sup>, E5<sup>r</sup>, F7<sup>r</sup>, I7<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>93</sup> L. D. Green, *John Rainolds's Oxford Lectures on Aristotle's Rhetoric* (Newark, New Jersey, 1986), pp. 145, 259, 213-223.

<sup>94</sup> L. J. Flynn S.J., *The De arte rhetorica (1568) by Cyprian Soarez S.J.: A Translation with Introduction and Notes* (Unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Florida 1955), pp. 22-29, 37-45.

<sup>95</sup> C. Soarez S.J., *De arte rhetorica libri tres* (Venice, 1568), B3<sup>r</sup>; B2<sup>r</sup>, C2<sup>V</sup>; A5<sup>r</sup>; A6<sup>r</sup>. Compare *DID*, pp. 6; 197-201; 206; 247-252. But see also *Partitiones oratoriae*, 2.5, 16.55

is taken directly from classical manuals but one of his definitions of a topic ('nothing other than certain marks which show us what we ought to investigate in each thing')<sup>96</sup> is more like Agricola than anything else in the tradition. But these are the only authors I have come across who apply Agricola's teaching to rhetoric.

Agricola's opinion that dialectic generates the material which rhetoric embellishes is shared by Ramus and his followers, as well as by Latomus and Bucoldianus, and in varying degrees by the growing number of sixteenth-century authors who write manuals of both subjects: Caesarius, Melanchthon, Ringelbergius, Sturm, Wilson, Fraunce and Bersman.

There is an interesting use of Agricola in some sixteenth century editions of Erasmus's *Parabolae*, as Margolin has shown in his edition of that work. Lycosthenes's edition of *Parabolae*, first published in Basel in 1557, which reorganises the similes and gives more precise references for them, also adds to the prefatory materials. In particular Lycosthenes quotes Agricola's whole chapter on comparisons, one of the most acute chapters in the topics section of *De inventione dialectica*. This is an apposite and intelligent inclusion on Lycosthenes's part, and it may have brought one of Agricola's most interesting passages to the attention of many late sixteenth-century readers, since this edition was reprinted many times.<sup>97</sup>

### *Conclusion*

The university syllabuses are enough to show that there is no single consistent reading of *De inventione dialectica*, and that the educational readings at least tend to cut against the originality and unity which is one of the work's great strengths. Beyond that certain themes emerge. In all three types of record the work is often treated as a version of the topics. Often it is made more like other versions, through simplification, omission of examples and addition of maxims. But we also find a good deal of attention to Agricola's descriptions of the use of the topics and to his method of dialectical reading. The commentaries and epitomes strongly support Agricola's ideas about the usefulness of dialectic in everyday language-situations and about the importance of literature. It would certainly be possible to put this interest across in some of the syllabus structures.

---

and *Institutio oratoria*, 3.5.7-8.

<sup>96</sup> *De arte rhetorica*, B2<sup>V</sup>: 'nihil aliud quam notae quaedam, quibus admonemur quid in ipsis pervestigare debeamus.' Compare *DID*, p. 9: 'Non ergo aliud est locus quam communis quaedam rei nota, cuius admonitu, quid in quaque re probabile sit potest inveniri.'

<sup>97</sup> Erasmus, *Opera omnia*, I, V, ed. J. C. Margolin (Amsterdam, 1975) pp. 34-54.

Harder to communicate, in the educational context at least, are the work's unity, the uniqueness of Agricola's version of the topics and the sections of the work which deal with more rhetorical aspects: emotional manipulation, pleasure, disposition, amplification, *copia* and style.

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

### ERASMUS AND VIVES

Erasmus (?1466/7-1536) was the most famous scholar in Europe in the early sixteenth century. His range of contacts and the enormous success of his own schooltexts (*Adagia*, *Colloquia*, *De conscribendis epistolis*, *De copia* and *De ratione studii* among others) gave him unequalled power and influence in the educational field. There are several points of comparison between Agricola and Erasmus. Both were in their time the acknowledged leaders of humanism in the north; the most important works of both were directed towards literary education, though neither did more than a little teaching. Both saw the study of the Bible as the ultimate goal of their reading in ancient literature. It is possible that Erasmus borrowed from Agricola the expression 'sacred letters' to describe scripture and the writings of the Church Fathers. Agricola may well have been Erasmus's hero,<sup>1</sup> particularly through Hegius, who was a friend and correspondent of the former and one of the first teachers of the latter. Although Erasmus went far beyond Agricola, particularly in writing original imaginative works, he never dared give a Latin oration in public in Italy, something the youthful Agricola had famously succeeded in doing.<sup>2</sup>

Erasmus paid Agricola the most generous tributes. In a letter of 1489 to Cornelius Gerard, he describes him as 'a man not only exceptionally highly educated in all the liberal arts but also extremely proficient in oratory and poetic theory, and moreover as well acquainted with Greek as with than Latin'.<sup>3</sup> In 1500, in the *Adagia*, under the proverb 'Canis in balneo', he

---

<sup>1</sup> Agricola, *Lucubrationes* (1539), pp. 186, 194. Erasmus, letters 181, 296, *Opus Epistolarum*, ed. P. S. Allen, I (Oxford, 1906), pp. 404, 570. C. Augustijn, *Erasmus: His Life, Works and Influence* (Toronto, 1991), pp. 38, 104-106, 188. The phrase was also used by Lactantius, *Institutes*, III.16, *PL* 6, 397B. Erasmus's relation to Agricola is studied in E. H. Waterbolk, *Een hond in het bad* (Groningen, 1966) and R. J. Schoeck, 'Agricola and Erasmus: Erasmus's inheritance of northern humanism', in F. Akkerman and A. J. Vanderjagt eds., *Rodolphus Agricola Phrisius* (Leiden, 1988), pp. 181-188.

<sup>2</sup> P. Melanchthon, *Opera Omnia*, ed. C. Bretschneider, *Corpus Reformatorum* (Brunswick, 1834-60), XI, 441.

<sup>3</sup> *Opus Epistolarum*, I, pp. 105-106: 'Ecce occurrit imprimis Alexandri mei paeceptoris quondam paeceptor, Rodolphus Agricola, vir cum omnium liberalium artium egregie

praised Agricola, 'whom I name as the man in all Germany and Italy most worthy of the highest public honour, in Germany because she gave him birth, in Italy because she made him a great scholar...There was no branch of fine learning in which that great man could not vie with the most eminent masters. Among the Greeks, he was the best Greek of them all, among the Latins the best Latin'.<sup>4</sup> In the 1514 letter from Basel to the Strasbourg printer Schürer which acts as a supplementary preface to *De copia*, he calls Agricola 'a man of more than human stature' and writes of his 'admiration and affection for that inspired and soaring mind'.<sup>5</sup> In other places Erasmus compares Agricola with advantage to Isocrates and Quintilian, with equality to Cicero.<sup>6</sup> Erasmus often urged his circle of correspondents to discover manuscripts of Agricola, and to publish them.<sup>7</sup> Erasmus himself first published one of Agricola's orations, with his *Ciceronianus*.<sup>8</sup>

The editors of printed editions of Erasmus's and Agricola's works also tended to present them as supports for each other. The commentaries on *De inventione dialectica* frequently refer to parallels in Erasmus, especially in relation to his discussion of *copia* in book three, chapter five. The printer who supplies the introductory letter to Erasmus's *Formulae* for writing letters mentions Agricola as an author to be studied.<sup>9</sup> Lycosthenes in producing his edition of Erasmus's *Parabolae*, in which the comparisons

---

eruditus, tum oratoriae atque poeticae peritissimus. Denique et Graecam linguam non minus quam Latinam calluit.' Translation by Sir Roger Mynors and D. F. S. Thompson, *Collected Works of Erasmus*, I (Toronto, 1974), p. 38.

<sup>4</sup> Erasmus, *Opera omnia*, 10 vols., (Leiden, 1703) hereafter *LB*, II, 166C-D: 'hoc equidem adagium eo libentius retero, quod mihi refricat, renovatque memoriam pariter ac desiderium Rodolphi Agricolae Frisiae, quem ego virum totius tum Germaniae, tum Italiae publico, summoque honore nomino: illius quae generit: huius quae literis optimis instituerit...Inter Graecos Graecissimus, inter Latinos latinissimus.' Translation from *Collected Works of Erasmus*, XXXI (Toronto, 1982), pp. 348-349. I cite from the collected edition, but the proverb was present from the first edition *Adagiorum Collectanea* (Paris, 1500), A4<sup>r</sup>. A change in the 1508 edition is recorded in note 37 below. On the *Adagia* in general see M. M. Phillips, *The Adages of Erasmus* (Cambridge, 1964). The introduction (ix-xiv) gives an essential overview. On the phrase itself, J. Monfasani, 'Bessarion, Valla, Agricola and Erasmus', *Rinascimento*, 28 (1988), pp. 319-320.

<sup>5</sup> *Opus Epistolarum*, II, p. 32: 'hominis vere divini, iamdudum expectamus: cuius ego scripta quoties lego, toties pectus illud sacrum ac coeleste mecum adoro atque exosculor.' The translation given is from *Collected Works of Erasmus*, XXIV (Toronto, 1979), p. 289.

<sup>6</sup> *Ciceronianus*, *LB*, I, 1014A. *Opus Epistolarum*, VII, p. 368: 'Nihil ab illo viro proficiscitur quod non divinitatem quandam spiret.'

<sup>7</sup> *Opus Epistolarum*, I, pp. 387, 414, II, p. 32, III, pp. 19, 30, 55.

<sup>8</sup> He refers to having done this in a letter of 20 March 1528. *Opus Epistolarum*, VII, p. 368.

<sup>9</sup> *Conficiendarum epistolarum formula*, *Collected Works of Erasmus*, XXV (Toronto, 1985), p. 256 (note by Sir Roger Mynors).

collected are organised by themes, very perceptively adds the passage on comparisons and similitudes from book one of *De inventione dialectica*.<sup>10</sup>

*De copia*

*De copia* was Erasmus's most successful manual and was probably the most studied of all Renaissance textbooks. Probably well over 150 editions appeared in the sixteenth century (153 editions are analysed in a table in chapter 13 above). It was very commonly present in school syllabuses and student booklists.<sup>11</sup> I shall argue that there are such close parallels between parts of Erasmus's book and parts of *De inventione dialectica* that the probability of direct influence may be entertained, despite the difficulties of transmission which I shall outline later.

The term *copia* is well established in Cicero and Quintilian as the goal of invention.<sup>12</sup> Orators are judged according to how much abundance of matter, words and figures they can assemble. Textbooks aim to help the student produce this *copia* of arguments which can then be subjected to the operations of disposition.<sup>13</sup> It is a frequent term, but an incidental one. No classical author devotes books or chapters to *copia* as a subject.<sup>14</sup>

As we have seen, Agricola devoted three chapters (III, v-vii) of *De inventione dialectica* to the acquisition and use of *copia*.<sup>15</sup> He justified this inclusion on the grounds that *copia* is invented, and that it makes a particular contribution to pleasing or offending. He uses the phrase *ubertas orationis*, fertility or richness of speech, as an equivalent for *copia*, and analyses it to mean 'ways of saying a lot'. This seems to imply more a particular kind of very full style (a sense Cicero and Quintilian had also employed) than invention in general, or to imply a kind of supercharging

---

<sup>10</sup> *Opera Omnia*, I, 4, ed. J. C. Margolin (Amsterdam, 1975), pp. 37-54.

<sup>11</sup> *Collected Works of Erasmus*, XXIII (Toronto, 1979), Introduction by C. R. Thompson, p. lix. T. W. Baldwin investigates its occurrence in various English school syllabi in *Shakspere's Small Latine and Lesse Greeke*, I, pp. 128-130, 156, 165, 298, 310, 314, 317, 348, 378, 402, 417, 430-431. The new edition of *De copia* by Betty Knott, *Opera omnia*, I, 6 (Amsterdam, 1988) contains an introduction which discusses the revisions of the work and its sources. This mentions Agricola but does not compare his account of *copia* with Erasmus's.

<sup>12</sup> *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, 1.1.1, *De oratore*, 1.85, *Institutio oratoria*, 5.10.100, 10.1.69, 10.5.3.

<sup>13</sup> *De oratore*, 2.58, *De inventione*, 1.49, *Institutio oratoria*, 7. Proem. 1.

<sup>14</sup> I would not wish to take *copia* quite so broadly as Terence Cave does when he considers it equivalent to eloquence or to *verba*. I think that abundance, either of texture or of material found, remains the crucial point. T. Cave, *The Cornucopian Text* (Oxford, 1979), pp. 3-8, and generally.

<sup>15</sup> *DID*, pp. 400-411.

through which the material found is made fuller, more abundant.<sup>16</sup> That some of the techniques involved are like those of amplification associates *copia* with the manipulation of emotion. At times it shades off towards style.<sup>17</sup> Near the end of III, v Agricola comments 'there is also another method of speaking copiously, which is when we say one and the same thing again and again, in different words'.<sup>18</sup> This is equivalent to *copia* of words.

Agricola's view seems to be that *copia* can be achieved by the application of a group of amplifying techniques to existing material, either a composition or a commonplace that is to hand, or something which has been found through topical invention. The attitude that the generation of *copia* can be an extra procedure towards the end of invention or a way of thickening up the writing of something already extant also underlies Erasmus's *De copia*. Besides introductions and examples, this work consists of a list of extra processes which may be applied to already discovered material (words or ideas) to supplement it or make it different. Among the procedures suggested are many which also have roles in the normal system of rhetoric.

Erasmus differs from Agricola in considering *copia* of words as well as *copia* of material. As we have seen, Agricola assigned *copia* of words to style, but the sentence quoted two paragraphs above establishes the main principle of this method of speaking copiously. The techniques which Erasmus describes in his first book, concerned with *copia* of words, come from the rhetorical discussions of ornament and the figures of speech. He suggests a list of figures through which a given form of words may be varied, and adds examples of different formulae for saying the same thing.<sup>19</sup> The second book is concerned with *copia* of things. All Erasmus's eleven methods for producing *copia* of things, though not the way in which they are set out, can be found in Agricola's chapters on *copia* and amplification. Erasmus does not observe Agricola's characteristic

<sup>16</sup> *DID*, p. 400: 'Constat autem orationis ubertas, vel quia pauca quidem, multis tamen eloquimur: vel quamvis paucis dicamus, congerimus tamen multa atque ut non magnitudine, acervo tamen rerum tendimus orationem: vel quod affluentissimum est, multa dicimus de multis.' *De oratore*, 3.121, 3.125, *Institutio oratoria*, 12.5.1.

<sup>17</sup> *DID*, p. 403: 'Sed haec eloquendi, non inveniendi preeceptis comprehenduntur.'

<sup>18</sup> *DID*, p. 403: 'Est et alia ratio dicendi copiose, quae fit, cum unam eandemque rem iterum atque iterum mutatis dicimus verbis.'

<sup>19</sup> The contents of *De copia*, I, chapters 10-32 are very like those of a manual of style. First Erasmus describes the prerequisites of style *LB*, I, 7D, (*Opera omnia*, I, 6, pp. 35-38) then he considers various degrees of deviant vocabulary *LB*, I, 812, (I, 6, pp. 40-52) then the various figures of speech, 14-22, (I, 6, pp. 54-75) then examples of variations and formulae.

distinction between exposition and argumentation.

Erasmus's first four methods of obtaining *copia* are explicitly related to each other: (1) take something which can be expressed in brief general terms and separate it into its parts; (2) rehearse in detail everything which led up to the final result; (3) look for the causes of the fact, even some distance back, and try to explain what gave rise to it; and (4) enumerate all the circumstances which accompany it and result from it.<sup>20</sup> All these aspects are covered in Agricola's discussion of *copia* in exposition, which considers various methods of recounting the story of the first book of the *Aeneid*.

We speak copiously in exposition when we are not content to explain the headings of things, but go into all their parts. If someone should say: 'Juno, because she hated the Trojans, scattered Aeneas's fleet with the force of a storm as he was sailing from Sicily. Carried away to Africa by the strength of the storm, he was received as a guest by Dido with the greatest kindness', he or she would seem to have summarised the whole first book of the *Aeneid*. Someone who wishes to say these things a little more fully will recount the causes of those hatreds on account of which Juno was hostile to the Trojans; then, as they sail from Sicily, Juno's request to Aeolus that he should unleash a tempest on the fleet.<sup>21</sup>

Here speaking copiously involves describing the parts of an event and its causes. Agricola claims that much of the rest of what Virgil adds was intended to fill out his picture of the variety of human life, and to please the audience (401).

Erasmus's fifth method is called *evidentia* or vividness, and involves making verbal pictures to fill in the reader's impression of what is going on. Examples are given under four subheadings: description of things, places, persons and times.<sup>22</sup> Description as ornament is considered in

<sup>20</sup> *LB*, I, 75A (I, 6, p. 197): 'si quod summatim ac generatim dici poterat id latius explicetur, atque in parteis diducatur'; 77A (200): 'singulatim ea quoque commemoramus, per quae ad eum exitum perventum est'; 77C (201): 'altius etiam causas repetimus, a quibus initia sit profecta', 77D (201): 'enumeramus etiam illa quae negocium comitantur, vel consequuntur.'

<sup>21</sup> *DID*, p. 401: 'Expositione dicuntur multa, cum non tantum satis habemus, summas rerum explicare, sed partes omnes prosequimur. Qui dicit enim, Iuno quoniam oderat Troianos, navigante ex Sicilia Aenea classem eius disiecit vi tempestatum; quarum impulsu delatus ad Africam, a Didone hospitio benignissime est acceptus. Hoc qui dicit, totum primum Aeneidos librum complexus videtur. Qui volet autem paulo uberiorius dicere ista, ille quidem causas odiorum, propter quas infensa Troianis erat Juno, recensebit: deinde ut e Sicilia navigarint, sollicitatum a Iunone Aeolum ut tempestatem classi immitteret.' Agricola goes on to list the events of the book in more detail and explain why Virgil has included them. This section is discussed under pleasing, in chapter ten above.

<sup>22</sup> *LB*, I, 77E (202): 'Quinta locupletendi ratio videtur potissimum ad ἐνόργειον quam evidentiam vertunt pertinere...rem non simpliciter exponemus sed ceu coloribus expressam in

Agricola's discussion of his example from the *Aeneid*, with particular reference to physical descriptions, character descriptions and the delineation of common emotions.<sup>23</sup> In III, ii there is a discussion of the use of vividness in description to generate emotion, while the emotional impact of amplification in visual description is discussed in III, iii.<sup>24</sup> Erasmus may also owe some debt to medieval poetics for this method and the next.<sup>25</sup> Both he and Agricola certainly consulted Quintilian for them both.<sup>26</sup>

Digression is Erasmus's sixth method. Agricola had considered it in III, iv under pleasure,<sup>27</sup> the general heading under which his section on *copia* appears. Erasmus's seventh method, the addition of epithets and descriptive phrases seems to repeat matter from his first book, while his eighth, the description of circumstances, seems to be very close to his fourth,<sup>28</sup> though with the addition of a list of attributes. Method nine is the method of amplification.<sup>29</sup> Erasmus's discussion of amplification lists a number of techniques (such as comparison, inference, and accumulation of synonyms and examples) taken from *Institutio oratoria*, VIII, 4. Agricola had used the same methods and the same chapter of Quintilian in his account of amplification in III, iii.

Method ten urges the writer to include as many rhetorical propositions as possible. Erasmus treats Quintilian's example of the Theban talents. Agricola analyses the same issue to illustrate his method of deriving many questions from a single question. Erasmus does not explain Quintilian's theory of status or his insistence on the need to look into the particular circumstances of the case in hand, which this example originally illustrated.<sup>30</sup> At the end of his account Erasmus refers to the other elements in the procedure of invention. The idea that an abundance of propositions would enrich a speech is also present in Agricola's discussion of *copia* of

---

tabula spectandam proponemus.' Erasmus speaks of using this for amplification, ornament or pleasing.

<sup>23</sup> *DID*, pp. 401-402.

<sup>24</sup> *DID*, pp. 383, 388: 'Quod si minus res patitur fieri, oratione tamen conantur, quammaxime datur, rem velut in conspectum dare, et oculis subiicere: quod describenda re, et imagine eius verbis exprimenda, eo (quod ἐνάρπετον Graeci, nostri evidentiam interpretati sunt) maxime consequuntur.'

<sup>25</sup> G. J. Engelhardt, 'Mediaeval Vestiges in the Rhetoric of Erasmus', *PMLA*, 63 (1948), pp. 739-744.

<sup>26</sup> *Institutio oratoria*, 6.2.25-36, 4.3.12-17.

<sup>27</sup> *DID*, p. 396.

<sup>28</sup> *LB*, I, 83E (218): 'Octava dilatandi ratio sumitur a circumstantiis, quas Graeci peristases vocant.' Erasmus's suggestions recall several of Agricola's topics.

<sup>29</sup> *LB*, I, 83F (218): 'Nono dilatandi ratio constat amplificatione. Eius complures formae referuntur a Fabio. Nos eos breviter attingemus quae ad praesens pertineant intitulatum.'

<sup>30</sup> *LB*, I, 85B-86A (220-23), *DID*, pp. 250-251, *Institutio oratoria*, 5.10.110-118.

argumentation, in III, v. Erasmus's eleventh method depends on the accumulation of proofs and arguments.<sup>31</sup> Although he refers to Quintilian's treatment, the same idea seems to be included in Agricola's discussion of *copia* of arguments.

We speak copiously in arguing when we divide the question proposed into many questions; when we bring numerous arguments to bear on particular questions; when we confirm arguments with various proofs piled on top of each other; and if, when something is to be put in the form of argumentation, we are not satisfied to have set down the headings of the thing but repeat its whole order.<sup>32</sup>

Towards the end of book two, Erasmus turns his attention to the method of collecting examples and sayings for use in embellishing compositions. He proposes a blank book in which examples and sayings are to be recorded under general moral headings.<sup>33</sup> It is quite probable that he got this idea from Guarino<sup>34</sup> via Agricola's writings or perhaps via Hegius's practice following Agricola. Agricola describes the technique in his letter *De formando studio*, which later northern writers cite as the origin of the method, as well as (more allusively) in the last chapter of *De inventione dialectica*.<sup>35</sup>

I have suggested that, at least in their general lines, all the elements of the second book of *De copia*, together with the principle of the first book, are set out in *De inventione dialectica*, mostly in a few pages early in book three. The structure and the idea of eleven methods are not present in Agricola's work, but the precepts on which all the methods are based are. Not only would Agricola have approved of the project of *De copia*, he may also have suggested its fundamental principles.

There are, however, some difficulties of transmission which count against the suggestion that Agricola influenced *De copia* directly. Erasmus was working on *De copia* (first published in 1512) from the 1490s. The first edition of *De inventione dialectica* only appeared in 1515. It is possible that Erasmus saw a manuscript or heard a summary through

<sup>31</sup> *LB*, I, 88D-E (230) is a summary of *Institutio oratoria*, 5.1.1-2, 5.8.1-5.10.52.

<sup>32</sup> *DID*, p. 402: 'Dicimus vero argumentando multa, et quando propositam quaestionem in multas quaestiones diducimus, et quaestiones numerosis colligimus argumentationibus, argumentationesque alii super alias probationibus confirmamus: et si quid exponendum in argumentatione, non contenti caput rei annotasse, totum ordinem eius recensemus.'

<sup>33</sup> *LB*, I, 100C-101D (258-260). Erasmus appears to claim that he thought it up himself ('nam tum quoque veniebat in mentem') but we can hardly believe him.

<sup>34</sup> Guarino, *Epistolario*, ed. R. Sabbadini, 3 vols. (Venice, 1916-1919), II, p. 270, lines 124-137.

<sup>35</sup> *Lucubrationes*, 198-9, *DID*, p. 453.

Hegius, who probably owned one. Other copies may have circulated in the Netherlands in the 1480s and 1490s.<sup>36</sup> However, as was suggested in chapter 13, manuscript copies were hard to find by the end of the century. In the 1508 edition of the *Adagia*, Erasmus listed the minor works of Agricola which he had seen, adding that the *Dialectic* was hiding somewhere.<sup>37</sup>

In a letter to Budé of October 1516, in which he defended his works (and *De copia* in particular) against the charge of triviality, he asserted that no one had dealt with copia before him. 'Quintilian touched on it a few times only.' George of Trebizond, whom he terms 'the man who compiled his works out of Hermogenes', promised great things on *copia* but produced nothing of value.

After my work was published I discovered a certain amount in Rudolph Agricola, a man who, had the envious fates allowed him to live longer, would have given Germany someone to match against the Italians, just as France now has Budé, though no one else.<sup>38</sup>

Erasmus often made errors of chronology, so that we need not assume deliberate deceit in order to maintain the hypothesis of influence. Again, he ought perhaps to have said more about Quintilian, from whom he borrowed many precepts on amplification, style and invention. Quintilian's use of the word *copia* was also an important influence. There is nothing in *De copia* which could only have been obtained by direct contact with Agricola. On the other hand the direction and the detail are close enough for some influence (perhaps by recollection) to seem more likely than none. *De copia* and Agricola's chapters on *copia* start from the same idea that pre-existing material can be subjected to various techniques of stylistic enrichment,<sup>39</sup> and they both describe many of these techniques. One could also say, however, that *De copia* results in writing which is opposed (even if in a potentially complementary way) to the main current of *De inventione dialectica*. *De inventione dialectica* tends to privilege the argumentative

<sup>36</sup> See chapter 13 above.

<sup>37</sup> *Adagia* (Venice, 1508), 47<sup>r</sup>: 'Latitant apud nescio quos commentarii dialectices.'

<sup>38</sup> *Opus Epistolarum*, II, p. 365: 'Trapezontius Hermogenis compilator copiose pollicetur de copia; ut cum pollicitantem usque sequenti mihi iam vertigo capit is oboriretur, nihil unquam de copia comperi quod alicuius esse momenti videretur...Fabius paucis attigit modo...Post editum opus comperi apud Rodolphum Agricolam nonnihil: quam virum si fatorum invidia superesse voluisset, haberet Germania quam Italiam opponeret, qualem nunc habet Gallia Budaeum, sed unum.' Translation from *Collected Works of Erasmus*, IV (Toronto, 1977), pp. 105-106.

<sup>39</sup> Even if they are argumentative techniques, in *DID*, III, their contribution is to stylistic texture.

aspect of language - the sinews of reasoning which give strength to exposition, the argumentative skeleton underlying a work - even though it acknowledges language's other effects. *De copia* ends up promoting a more expansive, more pleasure-conscious, more ludic approach to writing.<sup>40</sup> *De inventione dialectica* emphasizes the underlying structures of reason, *De copia* the exuberant verbal surface. This antithesis in their approach to language does not mean that the two works are incompatible. They can be used together in more than one way. Topical invention and the multiplication of questions can be used to produce *copia*, just as in *De inventione dialectica* the methods of *copia* can be used to decorate and point a firmly established argumentative structure.

### *Ecclesiastae*

Erasmus's last major work, *Ecclesiastae seu de ratione concionandi*, which was first published in 1535 in an unfinished form, revises and recapitulates many of his ideas on composition as well as on religion. Books 2 and 3, following the model of book 4 of Augustine's *De doctrina Christiana*,<sup>41</sup> provide a comprehensive textbook on discourse, adapted to the demands of preaching. It is striking how little use Erasmus makes of *De inventione dialectica* in his lengthy sections on invention. Neither Agricola's version of the topics nor his system of deriving arguments from the question are repeated. Instead Erasmus develops five kinds of sermon (with some help from medieval preaching manuals) and uses Cicero's list of topics, adding examples from Christian authors.<sup>42</sup>

He explains his neglect of Agricola after discussing the meanings of *locus*.

Concerning these (the topics) Rudolph Agricola, a man worthy of immortal glory, has written most exactly in our time. He wrote very diligently, in a style which could not be more refined. But a rather pretentious ingenuity, as if he was writing metaphysics, and the digressions, by which he differs with great subtlety now from Boethius, now from Aristotle, now from others, are enough to show that he composed the work not for the instruction of schoolboys, but for the admiration of the learned.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>40</sup> On this aspect, T. Cave, *The Cornucopian Text*.

<sup>41</sup> LB, V, 857F, *Opera omnia*, V, 4, ed. J. Chomarat (Amsterdam, 1991), p. 270.

<sup>42</sup> LB, V, 877-892 (*Opera omnia*, V, 4, pp. 310-341). Cicero's list of topics runs from 906-931, and is attributed at 931F (370-426). Some of the topics are from Themistius.

<sup>43</sup> LB, V, 920F-921A (402): 'De his accuratissime nostro seculo scripsit vir immortali gloria dignus Rodolphus Agricola. Scripsit autem exactissima cura, phrasi vero qua nihil esse potest exopolitius, sed acumina quaedam affectata, veluti de prima materia, ac digressiones

This is a rather curious justification in view of the demand for Agricola's work among students and teachers in the 1530s in northern Europe, though it coincides with other views about the difficulty of Agricola's work. If the advances Agricola made were really so important to him, could not Erasmus have accommodated his reservations by presenting a simplified version (omitting the polemics and the excessive cleverness), while retaining those of Agricola's ideas that he considered worthwhile?

The awkwardness of Erasmus's rejection (or at least avoidance) of Agricola's doctrine may on the other hand merely reflect another difficulty in the *Ecclesiastae*. For Erasmus in this work preaching is the highest form of oratory, and spiritual inspiration is its highest guarantee. This casts doubt on all human technique, and, while the book is often technical, some arguments are said to be too subtle for the preacher.<sup>44</sup> Although Erasmus insists that inspiration comes first, he also includes techniques for amplification, emotional manipulation, and the production of *copia*. *Ecclesiastae*, though an unduly neglected work in the past, is in many ways incoherent as well as incomplete. Both Erasmus's preface and the letters about its composition acknowledge this. It cannot really be treated as a summation of Erasmus's views on composition.<sup>45</sup>

Although some of Agricola's most important contributions are not registered, Erasmus may still have used ideas which he made current. The emphasis on teaching as more important than pleasing and moving recalls Agricola's opening chapter. Likewise the discussion of emotions in book three seems to follow Agricola: for example in the emphasis on comparing someone's character with what has befallen them, and in the list of topics for arousing pity.<sup>46</sup> Some remarks on disposition, about the ordering of arguments, also look like Agricola's but need not imply dependence.<sup>47</sup> One can also find details which are handled very differently, for example the

---

quibus nunc a Boetio, nunc ab Aristotele, nunc ab aliis magna quidem subtilitate dissentit, satis declarant illum hoc opus non cudasse pueris ediscendum, sed eruditis viris admirandum.'

<sup>44</sup> *LB*, V, 773-74, 783-90, 800, 850-51, 893-94.

<sup>45</sup> J. M. Weiss, 'Ecclesiastes and Erasmus', *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, 65 (1974), pp. 83-107, R. G. Kleinhans, 'Ecclesiastes sive de Ratione concionandi' in R. L. De Molen ed., *Essays on the Works of Erasmus*, (New Haven, 1978), pp. 253-266, J. Chomarat, *Grammaire et rhétorique chez Érasme*, 2 vols (Paris, 1981), esp. pp. 1053-1172. *LB*, V, 767 (29): 'Verum id factum est nec diligenter, nec ordine, sed sparsim, ut quidquam sese cogitationi per occasionem offerebat.' Weiss, pp. 85-6 cites references from the letters.

<sup>46</sup> *LB*, V, 978, 980.

<sup>47</sup> *LB*, V, 951-3, compared with *DID*, pp. 413-414, 428-430. Agricola considers disposition at greater length than Erasmus and with more examples, but the principles of his advice are quite similar. *LB*, V, 977-983, compared with *DID*, pp. 378-391. Erasmus is probably closer to Quintilian, 7.1.2f, 23f.

two authors' treatment of the arguments in favour of marriage.<sup>48</sup>

Erasmus often praised Agricola, particularly in the earlier part of his career. He also played an important part in the rediscovery and publication of Agricola's writings. Erasmus's formative years, however, and the greater part of his career coincided with the period in which Agricola's major work was not available. Erasmus's theories and his publications helped create the not wholly sympathetic context in which *De inventione dialectica* was read. Erasmus tended to disparage dialectic. Instead he concentrated on rhetoric and on the earlier stages of the curriculum. The techniques of writing he emphasized, proverbs, stories, dialogues, and *copia* are concerned more with the verbal surface than with the sinews and the structure of the composition. *De inventione dialectica* does not appear in Erasmus's theoretical schemes of study, though some of his associates, Alardus and Latomus for example, taught and commented on it. But its place in the university course already somewhat preempted Agricola's intentions. For him style and *copia* came at the end of the writing process, after the creative work had been done in dialectical invention, but in the Erasmian educational scheme *De copia* was studied by all schoolboys whereas *De inventione dialectica* appeared much later, if at all.

In his late rhetorical work, Erasmus is mildly critical of *De inventione dialectica*, finding it ill-adapted to the needs of students, and self-consciously clever. Even when he praised Agricola, the praise was more in the vein of generalised humanist admiration than in acknowledgement of specific dialectical excellence.<sup>49</sup> In his *Spongia adversus adspergines Hutteni*, Erasmus replies to the charge of ingratitude by saying that he has been very generous to his predecessors.

To Rudolph Agricola and Alexander Hegius, to whom in truth I owed the very least, did I not devote the fullest praise, in a work which everyone thinks will live on?<sup>50</sup>

Although one could discount this in rhetorical and psychological ways (the motivation of defending himself, the wish now to emphasize his own importance where previously he had overpraised his predecessors), it also represents a redrawing of the accounts. Whatever the young Erasmus owed to the inspiration of Agricola, he repaid the debt by persuading others to

<sup>48</sup> *LB*, V, 880A-D (315-16), *DID*, pp. 368-372.

<sup>49</sup> *LB*, I, 522C.

<sup>50</sup> *LB*, X, 1666A: 'Rodolpho Agricola et Alexandro Hegio quibus ego sane minimum debebam, nonne plenam laudem tribuo, in opere quod omnis existimat victurum?'

seek out and publish his works.<sup>51</sup>

### Vives

Juan Luis Vives (1492-1540) was born in Valencia. In 1509 he went to the University of Paris, and in 1514 to Bruges. From early 1517 he lived in Louvain as the tutor of William Croy, then 19 years old, the Bishop of Cambrai and a Cardinal. There he came to know Martin Dorp, who had edited the first edition of Agricola's *De inventione dialectica* (1515). In Louvain he was also involved in the foundation of the Trilingual College. In 1520 he published his attack on scholastic dialectic, *Adversus pseudodialecticos*. In 1522 he dedicated his commentary on St Augustine's *City of God* to Henry VIII. In 1523 he was in England, teaching rhetoric at Corpus Christi College, Oxford. His *De institutione feminae Christianae* and *De ratione studii puerilis* appeared in 1524. After a period alternating between Bruges and London, including some royal service, he was appointed Princess Mary's tutor in 1527. He left England in 1528 after being placed under house-arrest in connection with his support for Queen Catherine. From then until his death in 1540 he lived in Bruges and Paris. It was in this period that he published most of the works for which he is known today: *De officio mariti* (1529), *De concordia et discordia in humano genere* (1529), *De tradendis disciplinis* (1531), *De anima et vita* (1538), *Linguae Latinae exercitatio* (1538). According to the estimate of one of his biographers, these works made him (with Melanchthon) the most widely read humanist of northern Europe in the second half of the sixteenth century, with more than five hundred editions of his works appearing.<sup>52</sup> He contributed to theology, psychology, political and educational theory, as well as writing textbooks. Most of his references to Agricola appear in educational works published between 1528 and 1540.

Vives often recommends Agricola. Suggesting reading on invention, he refers to Cicero's *Topica* and Boethius's commentary 'or - which I prefer -

---

<sup>51</sup> It is possible that Erasmus was ambivalent towards *De inventione dialectica*. Evidence which might be adduced to support this conclusion would be: he makes no reference to it in the surviving letters of 1514-1516 (apart from the letter to Budé, n. 38 above) even when he is prompting Shürer to publish a manuscript of the minor works; in the letter to Dorp (337) he is hostile to dialectic generally; there was no Basel edition of the text of *De inventione dialectica*.

<sup>52</sup> P. G. Bietenholz ed., *Contemporaries of Erasmus*, 3 vols, (Toronto, 1984-87), C. G. Noreña, *Juan Luis Vives* (The Hague, 1970), pp. 1-3, 57, 65, 115-120. The chronology of the composition of Vives's works is uncertain. Also Vives, *On Education*, ed. Foster Watson (repr. Totowa, New Jersey, 1971). On connections between Louvain and Agricola see chapter 13 above.

the dialectic of Rudolph Agricola set out most fruitfully and most ingeniously in three books'.<sup>53</sup> In *De conscribendis epistolis*, in a review of various authors' letters, he comments: 'Rudolph Agricola, if he had himself corrected his own, could have been compared also with the greatest of the ancients: such was the solidity and soundness of his learning and the sharpness of his judgement'.<sup>54</sup> In *De tradendis disciplinis*, Agricola and Quintilian are suggested as models of language and style.<sup>55</sup>

Vives's works contain a large number of references to Agricola, or clear borrowings from him. These are often small details taken from and applied to widely different discussions, which suggests that Vives had a broad and thorough knowledge of Agricola. In his *De explanatione cuiusque essentiae*, Vives considers several types of definition and their component parts. He quotes at considerable length, as an example of the inquiring definition, the worked example of building up a definition of 'law', which Agricola gives in *De inventione dialectica* (VI, 134, *DID*, 27). Many of the other remarks in this book could have been derived from that chapter, though they need not have been. Agricola's views on the use of definition are quoted in Vives's commentary on St Augustine's *City of God*, which also adds a short paragraph lamenting his lack of fame and praising his knowledge and eloquence.<sup>56</sup>

In *De censura veri*, his fairly traditional discussion of the proposition and the forms of argumentation, while discussing *epagoge*, Vives notes Agricola's reasons for classifying it under induction (III, 168). In *De*

<sup>53</sup> L. Vives, *Opera omnia* (Valencia, 1782-1790, repr. Farnborough, 1964), VI, p. 355: 'aut quod malim, Rodolphi Agricolae dialecticam voluminibus tribus facundissime et ingeniosissime expositam.' Hereafter I cite from this edition in the text.

<sup>54</sup> L. Vives, *De conscribendis epistolis libellus* (Paris, 1547), p. 71: 'Rodolphus Agricola, si ipse sua emendasset, maximis quoque veterum potuisset comparari: tanta erat in illius eruditione soliditas et sanitas, atque acrimonia in iudicando.'

<sup>55</sup> VI, 364: 'in verbis et dictione Quintilianus, et Rodolphus Agricola.' Vives praises other modern authors in similar fashion.

<sup>56</sup> Augustine, *De civitate dei*, with Vives's commentary (Basel, 1522), pp. 59-60 (ad 2.22): 'Agricola quem hominem laudavit in proverbii Erasmus meritissimo: et qui unus exemplo potest esse, fortunam in omni re dominari, sicut Salustius inquit, eamque res omnes ex libidine magis celebrare, obscurareque, quam ex vero. Vix et hac nostra et patrum memoria fuit unus atque alter dignior, qui multum legeretur, multumque in manibus haberetur, quam Rodolphus Agricola Phrysius. Tantum est in eius operibus ingenii artis, iudicii, gravitatis, dulcedinis, eloquentiae, eruditioinis. At is paucissimis noscitur, vir non minus qui ut ab omnibus cognosceretur dignus quam Politianus, vel Hermolaus Barbarus, quos mea quidem sententia et maiestate et suavitate dictionis non aequat modo, sed etiam vincit. De eius dialecticis hoc aliquando memini me lusisse distichum quo quid de illis sentirem testabar. Haec sunt Agricolae Phrysii dialectica docti. Quis non crediderim meliora extare Latina.' I am grateful to Kees Meerhoff for this reference.

*tradendis disciplinis*, he uses Agricola's example about the philosopher and his wife to illustrate the procedure of topical invention (VI, 356). In *De instrumento probabilitatis*, Vives notes that the topics provide material for speaking on any matter and not only for arguments. He cites Agricola's belief that the ancient sophists had drawn their *copia* and facility from this source.<sup>57</sup> *De anima et vita* recollects a remark of Agricola's about the successful education of a deaf mute (III, 373, *DID*, 454-455).

*Vives's works on dialectic*

An important part of Vives's contribution, to dialectic as to other subjects, is the criticism of previous theories which he makes a preliminary to establishing his own position. He regarded this as an essential step in the acquisition of knowledge and expected to be subjected to the same kind of criticism by subsequent authors, as part of mankind's slow collaborative progress in the direction of truth (VI, 124).<sup>58</sup> He collected criticism as well as positive ideas from previous authors. The use which Vives made of some sections of Thomas More's famous letter to Martin Dorp in his *Adversus pseudodialecticos* has been noted.<sup>59</sup> In that work he also borrows from Agricola criticisms of previous authors. When he complains that Aristotle's *Topica* is like a collection of disparate fragments rather than the systematic presentation of a discipline for the benefit of students, he notes that Agricola has made this point before (VI, 120). In objecting that Cicero's topic from consequents, antecedents and repugnats should really be considered in the treatment of hypothetical argumentation, Vives is echoing a point Agricola made, and for which some commentators criticised him (VI, 128, *DID*, 170-1). He repeats Agricola's complaint that recent dialecticians have quibbled with arguments on the grounds of their topical origin as if they were methods of argumentation rather than sources of arguments (VI, 131, *DID*, 178-9). There is also a sense in which Agricola provides a reference point for Vives's criticism of earlier dialectic. In *Adversus pseudodialecticos*, following More, and perhaps Valla, Vives insists that dialectic must be regarded as a tool for working

<sup>57</sup> III, 117: 'ex his appareat non solum ad arguendum valere hanc copiam, sed ad dicendum de quacunque re velis, ut non absurde videatur Agricola Rodolphus existimare Gorgiam, Hippiam, Protagoram, Prodicum et alios Graecos sophistas...ex his fontibus ubertatem illam et redundantiam eorum quae dicturi essent haurire.'

<sup>58</sup> Noreña, Vives, pp. 167-73.

<sup>59</sup> R. Guerlac, *Juan Luis Vives Against the Pseudo-Dialecticians*, (Dordrecht, 1979), pp. 24, 26, 157-159. The connection was first pointed out by More himself, *ibid.*, pp. 163-165, Erasmus, *Opus Epistolarum*, letter 1106.

with real language (III, 40). *De tradendis disciplinis* complains that no matter how carefully Aristotle is read he does not provide a practical instrument for collecting arguments.<sup>60</sup> Both these shortcomings of earlier dialectic seem to be made good by what Agricola offers.

Vives did not produce a manual of dialectic, but his *De instrumento probabilitatis* is a thorough account of dialectical invention. His list of topics, though it is not identical with Agricola's, seems to be based on it,<sup>61</sup> as do the contents of some of the individual topics. (For example adjacents, action, place, *comparata*.) Vives follows Agricola in asserting that the topics contain within them all kinds of information which can be useful in arguing. He argues that there should be a certain degree of overlap between topics in order to ensure that the strongest arguments are found (III, 115, *DID*, 110-11). He follows Agricola in drawing 'man' through each of the topics (III, 115-6, *DID*, 364-66). He too insists on the use and difficulty of analysing the arguments of others back to their sources (III, 117-8, *DID*, 358-59). After reporting Agricola's instructions on reading he stresses the need to bear in mind the questions and sub-questions of the text (III, 118, *DID*, 360-62). In the same vein, but not to so complex a degree as Agricola, he analyses the ways in which adjacent propositions may be related. He repeats Agricola's instructions for considering the topical relations of each member of the question/proposition separately in order to find arguments (III, 120, *DID*, 367-68). He works an example, and explains that with familiarity the most likely topics will spring to mind accurately without the need to run through the whole sequence. In this work he makes intelligent use of a number of Agricola's ideas. He seems to take more from the chapters on the use of the topics than from those describing the topics themselves.

#### *Vives on Psychology and Education*

It is often said that Vives's psychology is at the root of his approach to knowledge and his educational theory. Some might maintain that the two are so close that there is in reality only one theory. In any case, the

<sup>60</sup> VI, 114: 'nemo est enim, qui, quantumlibet diligenter lecta, et excussa universa Aristotelis *Logica*, sentiat se instrumentum habere, quo in aliqua ad disserendum materia argumenta in promptu excogetet.'

<sup>61</sup> Vives's topics are at III, 87-115. Taking *essentia* as equivalent to definition, the first seven topics are the same. In Vives the topics around causes, which are similar in their divisions to Agricola's, come between action and subject. The next four correspond. Vives omits name of a thing and includes testimony in attributes. Comparisons absorbs similars, *diversa* opposites, and Vives adds the topics before and after.

relationship between education and psychology has two sides, and there seem to be ways in which Agricola's dialectic influences Vives's picture of the mind. When Vives describes the reason in the act of contemplation wandering across the contents of the memory, the various manoeuvres he instances (which we usually connect with the association of ideas) are expressed in terms of topical relations (singles to universals, effects to causes, attributes to subjects) (III, 354, 361). This recalls some of the remarks Agricola made at the beginning of his book about the reasons for the efficacy of topical invention (*DID*, 9). This sort of process, or perhaps one related to the commonplace book, may be in Vives's mind when he speaks of the different degrees of agility in the exploitation of the treasure house of memory (again echoing *De inventione dialectica*, I, ii). It is hard not to think of invention (which is in a way a particular instance of this process) as the model for the following description of the mind in action.

Human knowledge moves from those things which are known by the senses to those which are known by the soul and mind, namely from singulars to universals, from material things to spiritual, from effects to causes, from things which are apparent and obvious to those which are hidden. But to God, who is the maker of all things, causes are prior to and better known than effects, universals than singulars. In ourselves as well, just as whoever excels, either in natural talent, or experience, or knowledge, follows more the way of nature, that is of God, in acquiring and organising knowledge, while those who are duller keep to this method based on the senses, the back and forth motion of the reason however travels through all the topics of arguments.<sup>62</sup>

Both in minds which work from the senses to abstract concepts and in those which grasp universals, reason progresses through the topics. The topics correspond to the processes of reason. The key word in Vives for the skill in managing this process (*prudentia*) is named as the equivalent of knowledge of the topics in *De inventione dialectica*.<sup>63</sup> This passage shows

<sup>62</sup> *De anima, Opera omnia*, III, 354-355: 'notitia humana est ab iis, quae sensibus sunt cognita, ad ea quae animo et mente, nempe a singularibus ad universalia, a materialibus ad spiritalia, ab affectis ad causas, a promptis et patentibus ad recondita; Deo autem omnium opifici, atque actori causae priores sunt ac notiores quam effecta, universalia quam rerum singula: in nobis quoque ut quisque maxime vel ingenio valet, vel rerum usu, vel doctrina, magis viam naturae, hoc est Dei sequitur in cognoscendo et colligendo, qui autem crassiores sunt, hanc sensuum viam tenent, discursus autem rationis per omnes locos argumentorum versatur.'

<sup>63</sup> III, 355: 'Ratio eorum quae aguntur in bono est prudentia, eorum autem quae exercentur in utilibus vitae huius exterioris, ut Aristoteli placet, est ars.' *DID*, p. 3. Although *prudentia* is expected in this ethical context, it is also striking that Vives should be talking about prudence in relation to the reason, just after talking about the reason in terms of the topics.

Vives developing something of his own on the basis of what he has found in Agricola.

In addition to these strong influences from the dialectic, Vives participates in the educational tradition of Agricola's influence, from *De formando studio*, through his encouragement of subjects imparting practical knowledge and through commonplace books, which he describes in *De ratione studii puerilis* (1523) (I, 268), *Introductio ad sapientiam* (1524) (I, 11) and *De tradendis disciplinis* (VI, 310, 314). Carlos Noreña finds that Vives's style of practical reasoning is influenced by Agricola's teaching.<sup>64</sup>

---

<sup>64</sup> C. G. Noreña; 'Agricola, Vives and the Low Countries', *Colloquia Europalia 1: Vives-Erasmus*, ed. J. IJsewijn, A. Loseda (Louvain, 1987), pp. 99-118 (114, 115).

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

### MELANCHTHON

Philip Melanchthon (1497-1560), famous as the *praeceptor Germaniae*, is remembered for the part he played in the Reformation. He was one of Luther's closest associates, the author of the Augsburg confession (1530), which became the broad doctrinal standard of the Lutheran churches (as Owen Chadwick puts it) and the *Loci communes*, a systematic account of Protestant theology.<sup>1</sup> In his youth he was exceptional for his mastery of Greek, acquired at grammar school in Pforzheim, and by private study alongside his traditional university studies at Heidelberg and Tübingen. In 1518 he was appointed professor of Greek at Wittenberg. Once established there he rapidly took an interest in reforming the courses in rhetoric and dialectic. He was called in to advise on programmes of study for schools and universities elsewhere in Germany, as well as being responsible for several course reforms at Wittenberg. His educational schemes follow Erasmus and also develop Erasmian ideas in new directions. He wrote textbooks of rhetoric and dialectic which were among the most successful in the sixteenth century. According to Risse ninety editions of dialectic textbooks by Melanchthon were printed in the sixteenth century.<sup>2</sup> The most frequently printed was *Erotemata dialectices* (46 editions between 1547 and 1600, and a few in the seventeenth century too), but each of his dialectic textbooks was printed on average slightly more than once a year during its period of currency. After 1585 there appears to be some reduction. According to Murphy a total of 39 editions of Melanchthon's main rhetoric

---

<sup>1</sup> On Melanchthon generally, W. H. Woodward, *Studies in Education during the Age of the Renaissance* (Cambridge, 1906), pp. 211-243, C. Vasoli, *La dialettica e la retorica dell'Umanesimo* (Milan, 1968), pp. 278-309, 323-329. R. R. Bolgar, *The Classical Heritage* (Cambridge, 1954), pp. 344-349 discusses his educational reforms. O. Chadwick, *The Reformation* (Harmondsworth, 1972), p. 65. Kees Meerhoff is preparing a book on Melanchthon; two of his preparatory articles touch on Melanchthon's use of Agricola: 'Mélancthon, lecteur d'Agricola: rhétorique et analyse textuelle', *Réforme - Humanisme - Renaissance*, no. 30, vol. XVI (1990), pp. 5-22, 'The Significance of Philip Melanchthon's Rhetoric in the renaissance', in P. Mack ed., *Renaissance Rhetoric* (London, forthcoming).

<sup>2</sup> W. Risse, *Bibliographica Logica*, I, 1472-1800 (Hildesheim, 1965). There are three main versions of the dialectic manual.

textbooks were printed.<sup>3</sup> Melanchthon's textbooks were often prescribed in Protestant universities and they were much used by Catholics as well.

Melanchthon first came into contact with the memory of Rudolph Agricola through his great-uncle, Johann Reuchlin. In 1509 when he first went to Heidelberg, aged twelve, Melanchthon tells us in a letter to Alardus, the memory of Agricola was still fresh. Reuchlin, Spangel and others would tell stories of his interventions in the University and of his place in Dalberg's circle. At this time, or shortly after, he first came across Agricola's letter to Barbireau, *De formando studio*.<sup>4</sup> In 1516 his friend in Tübingen, Oecolampadius, presented him with a copy of the 1515 edition of *De inventione dialectica*.<sup>5</sup> In 1539 Melanchthon produced two biographical accounts of Agricola (a letter to Alardus in response to his request and an oration to the graduating class at Wittenberg).<sup>6</sup> In the letter, after praising dialectic, he adds 'nor do any recent writings on the topics or the practice of dialectic exist which are better or fuller than the books of Rudolph Agricola'.<sup>7</sup> In the speech he says, 'since Rudolph first reformed the character of language and dialectic in Germany and propounded a better method of learning, it is fitting to remind students of some of his sayings and arguments'.<sup>8</sup> In a letter of 1541, which served as a preface to his early works, he attributed his reconsideration of dialectic and language to Oecolampadius's gift to him. 'I was not only instructed by reading these books, but also stimulated to consider more carefully and distinguish the forms of arguments in the orations of Cicero and Demosthenes. As a result of this I managed to achieve two things. I understood the orations better, and read them with more pleasure, and I was able to observe the use of the precepts of dialectic'.<sup>9</sup> This is a reference to the method of dialectical

<sup>3</sup> J. J. Murphy, *Renaissance Rhetoric* (New York, 1981), breaks this figure down among the three versions but he gives 1519 editions of each of them, so the division certainly, and perhaps also the total, needs to be treated with suspicion.

<sup>4</sup> W. Maurer, *Der junge Melanchthon*, 2 vols., (Göttingen, 1967-69), I, pp. 14-15, 24.

<sup>5</sup> P. Melanchthon, *Opera Omnia*, ed. C. G. Bretschneider, *Corpus Reformatorum*, 28 vols. (Brunswick, 1834-60), hereafter *CR*, IV, p. 716.

<sup>6</sup> *Lucubrationes* (1539), +3<sup>r</sup>-4<sup>r</sup>. *CR*, VI, 438-446.

<sup>7</sup> Agricola, *Lucubrationes* (1539), +4<sup>r</sup>: 'Nec vero ulla extant recentia scripta de locis et de usu dialectices meliora et locupletiora Rodolphi libris.'

<sup>8</sup> *CR*, XI, 439: 'Cumque Rodolpus primum in Germania emendaverit genus sermonis et dialecticam ac meliorem discendi rationem monstraverit, consentaneum est plerisque eius dictis ac disputationibus utiliter commonefieri studiosos.'

<sup>9</sup> *CR*, IV, 716: 'Horum lectione non erudiebar tantum, sed etiam excitabar, ut in orationibus Ciceronis et Demosthenis argumentorum formas diligentius considerarem ac distinguarem. Qua ex re utrumque adsequebar, ut et orationes illas melius intelligerem ac legerem libentius, et usum praeceptionum perspicerem.'

reading proposed towards the end of book two of *De inventione dialectica*, which develops into an appreciation of Agricola's general policy of analysing examples from poetry and oratory.

Speaking of his theological works, he continues,

I have used dialectic like a thread in explaining beliefs, not only because this form is more fluent, and because things are understood more easily when kept within these limits, but also because things said properly and clearly are said in a most orderly way.<sup>10</sup>

So Melanchthon uses dialectic to organise works in such a way that they can easily be understood. This use of dialectic in reading and composition reflects Agricola's way of presenting the subject.<sup>11</sup> In *Elementa rhetorices* (1531), Melanchthon recommends that in dialectic the works of Caesarius and Agricola should be used alongside his own.

There are also the books of Rudolph Agricola, which I think should be read very carefully. The books of Johann Caesarius, which cover the whole subject and are well suited to young readers, have recently appeared. For this reason I would like them to be taught to young people in all the schools according to the correct method. Certainly I advise those who read my books to add Caesarius's and Agricola's to them. Those who have done this will, in my view, have completed the art and be skilled craftsmen, whether they use the art in writing or disputing.<sup>12</sup>

In *Erotemata dialectices* (1547) the reference to Agricola is dropped, and Willichius's *Erotemata* is substituted.<sup>13</sup>

### *Loci communes*

I have collected in two works, in the *Theological Commonplaces* and in the *Commentary* on Paul's *Epistle to the Romans*, the teaching of our churches,

<sup>10</sup> CR, IV, 718: 'Usus autem sum dialectico quodam filo in explicandis dogmatibus, non eo tantum, quod haec forma expeditior est, et facilius res comprehensae talibus metis intelliguntur, sed etiam quia, quae proprie et perspicue dicuntur, moderatissime dicuntur.'

<sup>11</sup> In his article 'The Significance', n. 1 above, Kees Meerhoff develops this point more fully, showing how Melanchthon treats dialectical analysis as a method of reading and a method of composition. He points out that Melanchthon usually commented on texts (classical or sacred) in conjunction with his lectures on rhetoric and dialectic, and he shows how ideas formulated in Melanchthon's commentaries reappear in his manuals and vice versa.

<sup>12</sup> P. Melanchthon, *Rhetorices Elementa* (Lyons, 1539), a2v: 'Extant et Rodolphi Agricolae libri, quos diligentissime legendos esse censeo. Nuper editi sunt libri Ioannis Caesarei, qui totam artem continent, et ad captum primae aetatis scripti sunt. Quare optarim, eos proponi adolescentibus in omnibus scholis pro iusta methodo. Certe his qui meos libellos legunt, consulo, ut adiungant Caesareum et Rodolphum, quod qui fecerit, mihi quidem absolvisse artem videbitur, ac perfectus artifex erit, si vel scribendo vel disputando usum artis sibi fecerit.'

<sup>13</sup> CR, XIII, 413-416. T. W. Baldwin, *Shakspere's Small Latine*, II, p. 9.

which I wanted to pass on truthfully and without error to those who follow.<sup>14</sup>

Melanchthon's *Loci communes* is his most enduring work, which Luther said ought to be esteemed next to the Bible.<sup>15</sup> It attempts a full and clear account of Protestant doctrine. His pamphlet *De locis communibus ratio* explains that by commonplaces he means 'all common forms of all things to be done, of all virtues, of all vices and of all other common themes, which are widely in use and which can come up in the different incidents of human affairs and letters'.<sup>16</sup>

The description will certainly fit the collection of themes and positions collected in the *Loci communes*. In an acknowledgement which confirms Agricola's influence on his methods of discovery and presentation,<sup>17</sup> he adds, 'concerning the commonplaces in this sense of the term, Rudolph Agricola in his letter on the method of study, and Erasmus in *De copia* have written best'.<sup>18</sup>

#### *Rhetorical and dialectical Works*

Between 1518, the year in which he was appointed Professor of Greek at Wittenberg, 'teaching before he had learned',<sup>19</sup> and 1547 Melanchthon wrote six books on rhetoric and dialectic. *De rhetorica libri tres* of 1519 is chiefly concerned with invention and teaching. In the preface he insists on the importance of dialectic and the close connections between the two subjects.

<sup>14</sup> CR, IV, 717: 'Collegi in duobus libellis, in *Loci Theologicis* et in *commentario Epistolae ad Romanos* doctrinam Ecclesiarum nostrarum, quam profecto optarim sinceram et incorruptam ad posteros propagari.' Here he refers to his second commentary on *Romans*, CR, XV, 493-716. In his commentary at CR, XVI, 443-492, the *Epistle to the Romans* is analysed as a speech in the judicial genre. The sources of some arguments are analysed at 453-455. The speech structure has to be supplemented with several digressions and additional precepts and he acknowledges the difficulty at 483. A purely dialectical analysis might well have worked better.

<sup>15</sup> M. Luther, *Werke*, XVIII (Weimar, 1908), p. 601 (*De servo arbitrio*, 1525).

<sup>16</sup> CR, XX, 695: 'Voco igitur locos communes omnes omnium rerum agendarum, virtutum, vitiorum, aliorumque communium thematum communes formas, quae fere in usum, variasque rerum humanarum ac literarum causas incidere possunt.'

<sup>17</sup> W. Maurer, 'Melanchthon's *Loci Communes* von 1521 als wissenschaftliche Programmschrift', *Luther Jahrbuch*, 42 (1960), pp. 1-51, is careful to moderate the broad claims made for Agricola's influence on Melanchthon by P. Joachimsen, 'Loci Communes', *Gesammelte Aufsätze* (Aalen, 1970), pp. 387-442, originally in *Luther Jahrbuch*, 8 (1926). He does not, however, attempt to deny the influence on the *Loci communes*.

<sup>18</sup> CR, XX, 696: 'De usu locorum communium optime scripserunt Rodolphus Agricola in epistola de ratione studii, et Erasmus in *Copia*, in hanc fere sententiam.'

<sup>19</sup> CR, IV, 716: 'et docere prius alios coepisse, quam ipse didicisse.'

And in my view all the things which are needed at the beginning of one's studies, and which therefore shape whatever follows, depend on dialectic. Letters flourished when this was observed, I mean when dialectic and rhetoric educated young people with equal benefit. For once rhetoric was expelled from the schools, look how thin, how deprived, how useless dialectic became.<sup>20</sup>

For, in order that you should know the method of studies which I propose, rhetoric and dialectic have a common purpose. The latter travels within the confines of the matter proposed with its sails reefed, the former spreads itself more freely. The discourse of dialectic is suited to teaching, the language of rhetoric to moving an audience.<sup>21</sup>

Melanchthon's insistence, in the preface to a rhetoric book, that rhetoric and dialectic have to be taught together is thoroughly Agricolan. In his preface to *Compendaria dialectices ratio* (1520) he repeats the point. Because rhetoric cannot be taught without dialectic he included dialectic in his previous work. Now the *studiosi* have asked him to devote an entire work to dialectic, which he has done, but concisely, because the nature of dialectic suggests this, and in order that students should not be put off by its bulk.<sup>22</sup> This in turn necessitated an equally concise pure rhetoric, the *Institutiones rhetoricae* (1521). It is altogether sympathetic to Agricola's aims that the same person should write complementary textbooks on rhetoric and dialectic, although, as we shall see, Melanchthon does not divide the subject-matter between the two subjects in quite the same way as Agricola had. The *Dialecticae libri quatuor* of 1528 is a considerably revised and enlarged dialectic intended as an introduction to the subject to prepare young people for books which treat the art more fully, such as those by Caesarius, Agricola and Aristotle.<sup>23</sup> The *Elementa rhetorices* (1531)—its companion, since rhetoric and dialectic 'are so joined together that it is more correct to look at both together than either of them on its

<sup>20</sup> *CR*, I, 64: 'Ac nisi fallit opinio mea, ex dialectica pendent omnia, quae ut sint initia studiorum, reliqua ex suo modo temperant. Vigebant literae quondam cum et illa esset salva, hoc est cum paribus officiis dialectica et rhetorica iuuentum erudirent. Iam explosa ex scholis rhetorica vide quam sit exigua, quam sit manca, quam sit inutilis dialectica.'

<sup>21</sup> *CR*, I, 64-65: 'Nam ut scias quae sit ratio studiorum, de quibus dico, commune argumentum est et rhetori et dialectico. Hic intra fines propositi negotii velis paulum contractioribus navigat, ille evagatur liberius: huius ad docendum, illius ad movendum est accommodata oratio.' The nautical metaphor recalls Valla, *RDP*, pp. 176-177. Melanchthon made similar remarks throughout his career, *CR*, II, 542, 543 (1531) and n. 55 below (1558).

<sup>22</sup> *CR*, I, 152-54: 'Neque enim rhetorica citra dialecticorum usum commode tractari absolvique possunt.'

<sup>23</sup> *Dialecticae libri IV* (Lyons, 1534), p. 4.

own'—prepares for Quintilian and Cicero.<sup>24</sup> Finally, in the *Erotemata dialectices* of 1547 the dialectic has been completely revised and enlarged perhaps to the point where it has become a complete and self-sufficient dialectic course instead of an introduction. It would now be possible for Melanchthon's dialectic to replace the study of Aristotle's entirely. This seems to have happened in some university syllabuses.

#### *Structure of the books*

Melanchthon's rhetoric books always emphasize the importance of dialectic to the orator. After setting out the five tasks of the orator, they divide possible themes into simple and complex, and into four types: demonstrative, deliberative, judicial and explanatory. Simple themes and educational themes are discussed in terms of four or five questions (the number and the questions vary in different versions),<sup>25</sup> such as: what is it? what are its parts? what are its causes? what are its effects? what things follow and what oppose? (1531). The other three types of theme are considered next, with a discussion of status theory and the outline contents of each part of the oration. Then follow the topics, rules for disposition, figures and tropes, and amplification. In 1531 emotional manipulation is discussed after the topics, imitation after amplification.<sup>26</sup>

Melanchthon's dialectic treatises are divided into four books. In book one he begins by discussing the nature of dialectic, and how it differs from rhetoric. The subject-matter of dialectic is the theme or the question. The main topics of this book are definition and division. Under definition are included the predicables, the categories and the post-predicaments. At the end of the first book Melanchthon explains that invention in simple themes consists of asking for definition, causes, parts, and effects.<sup>27</sup> By 1547 this has become a list of ten questions, which he calls a method: What does the word mean? Does the thing exist? What is the thing? What are its parts? What are its species? What are its causes? What are its effects? What are its adjacents? What are its cognates? What are its repugnants?<sup>28</sup>

Book two is concerned with the proposition. Book three deals with argumentation, including syllogism, expository syllogism, enthymeme,

<sup>24</sup> *Rhetorices elementa* (Lyons, 1539), a2<sup>r</sup>-3<sup>r</sup>: 'quae ita copulatae sunt et inter se devinctae, ut rectius ambae simul percipiantur, quam seorsum alterutra.' *CR*, II, 542.

<sup>25</sup> *De Rethorica libri tres* (Basel, 1519), b4<sup>r</sup>. *Institutiones rhetoricae* (Hagenau, 1521), a2<sup>r-v</sup>, *CR*, XIII, 424, 428.

<sup>26</sup> *CR*, XIII, 454-455, 492-504.

<sup>27</sup> *CR*, XX, 724, *Dialecticae libri IV* (Lyons 1534), p. 50.

<sup>28</sup> *CR*, XIII, 573.

induction, example and sorites. In 1547 he adds a section on the rules of consequence, taken from scholastic logic.<sup>29</sup> The fourth book is concerned with invention. Apart from the topics of person and thing (Melanchthon's term for the general topics), this includes discussion of the reliability of knowledge, the kinds of question, demonstration, and, in 1547, the sophisms.<sup>30</sup> Melanchthon treats the topics as additional to the method of simple invention outlined in book one, almost as a type of amplification.<sup>31</sup>

The distinguishing features of Melanchthon's books seem to be: the organisation (especially placing predicables and categories under definition, and putting invention last), the emphasis on theme or question, the technique of simple invention, with its rather short list of fixed questions, and the consequent relegation of the topics to the status of some sort of supplement. With successive versions his manuals become more inclusive. In particular, after 1547 they contain a good deal of traditional material from scholastic logic. This may represent an attempt either at rapprochement with the scholastic tradition,<sup>32</sup> or to provide a comprehensive dialectic rather than an introduction to the study of Aristotle.

### *Definitions of Dialectic*

Melanchthon's successive definitions of dialectic have the same general point as Agricola's. In 1519

Dialectic is the precise and methodical investigation of any theme which is proposed. Thus, if you have to speak about duty, the art requires that you first present a definition of duty, then you lay out the parts. If you compare the parts with each other, some are consonant with duty, some opposed to it.<sup>33</sup>

The initial sentence is rather similar to what Agricola says about dialectic: 'the art of discoursing convincingly on any given subject'.<sup>34</sup> What is

<sup>29</sup> *CR*, XIII, 626-636.

<sup>30</sup> *CR*, XIII, 726-752.

<sup>31</sup> In his commentary on Cicero's *Topica* Melanchthon says that there is no real difference between arguments and figures of thought. The topics contain precepts for the invention of arguments, and a method of amplification, *CR* XVI, 807. See K. Meerhoff, 'The Significance', n. 1 above.

<sup>32</sup> Scholastic dialectic was revived in the later sixteenth century. See chapter 18 below.

<sup>33</sup> *De rhetorica libri tres* (Basel, 1519), a3v: 'Est enim dialectica cuiusque thematis propositi exacta et artificiosa pervestigatio, ut si de officio dicendum sit, exigit ars ut primum finitione declares officium, deinde subiicias partes, quas si inter se compares, erunt quaedam officio affinia, quaedam contraria.'

<sup>34</sup> *DID*, p. 193: 'ars probabiliter de qualibet re proposita disserendi.'

different is the emphasis on 'methodical investigation' (*artificiosa pervestigatio*) and the four aspects which seem to be the key to Melanchthon's notion of invention: definition, parts, things agreeing, things opposed. In 1520,

Dialectic is the art of discussing any theme in a relevant and suitable way. It shows the nature and parts of any theme simply, and describes the proposed theme in such clear words that the audience cannot fail to understand what it contains, whether it is true or false.<sup>35</sup>

This definition adds an emphasis on simplicity, and on probable discussion, but it continues to stress dialectic's role in invention as well as in presentation.

In 1547, dialectic is the art or method of teaching correctly, clearly, and in order, about all subjects or questions concerning which men should be taught. It involves defining and dividing, connecting up true arguments and picking apart false ones.<sup>36</sup> The definition is more definite and confident than before, but it is recognisably like Agricola, in the goals it sets for dialectic and in its emphasis on teaching.

These changes in Melanchthon's definitions of dialectic (though they do not entirely correspond to the revisions he makes in the main text of the successive versions), can be seen as altering the aspect of Agricola's programme to be emphasized.

### *Methods of Invention*

Melanchthon's ideas on the method of invention are rather different from Agricola's. Invention in *Compendiaria dialectices ratio* (1520) is presented in two parts. Under definition there is a list of questions about simple themes: what does the name mean? what is the thing? what are the causes? what are the parts? what are its functions?. This is a slightly different list from that given in the rhetoric. In book four, Melanchthon considers the topics.

The whole force of invention resides in the topics, from which discourse customarily flows, like a river from its source. In every theme there are

<sup>35</sup> *CR*, XX, 711: 'Dialectica est artificium apposite ac proprie de quoconque themate disserendi. Simpliciter enim cuiusque thematis naturam et partes ostendit, et quod proponitur, adeo certis verbis praescribit, ut non possit non deprehendi, quicquid inest, sive veri, sive falsi.'

<sup>36</sup> *CR*, XIII, 513-514: 'Dialectica est ars seu via, recte, ordine, et perspicue docendi, quod fit recte definiendo, dividendo argumenta vera connectendo, et male cohaerentia seu falsa retexendo et refutando...circa omnes materias seu quaestiones, de quibus docendi sunt homines.'

some arguments which nature itself immediately suggests to clever people. There are only a few of these and they must be strengthened, adorned and amplified with the help of many topics...From the dialectical topics *copia* of discourse arises, as if from a mountain spring.<sup>37</sup>

The tactical addition which distinguishes the fourth sentence from the first (*copia*) reveals the shift in the role of the topics in Melanchthon's scheme.<sup>38</sup> The topics are now for working over, adding to and embellishing, the arguments which arise 'naturally'. (These 'naturally arising' arguments are those which are prompted by the questions listed in book one). The point about the role of the topics is driven home by the *Institutiones rhetoricae* (1521).

Certain topics contain invention. They show what you can say on any theme you please. The theme is not invented; rather the topics by which the theme is strengthened or decorated are revealed by the theme proposed.<sup>39</sup>

In both these quotations 'topics' is used to refer to the material discovered by using the topics as well as to the topics themselves. This usage probably reflects the meaning of the rhetorical term 'commonplace', a prepared section of a speech dealing with a specific theme. In the second quotation this meaning is dominant.

In 1527, the four basic questions (which are now different: what is it? what are its causes? what are its parts? what are its duties or effects?) treat simple themes, while the topics continue to be used to amplify this basic material.<sup>40</sup> However in book four, on the topics, the discussion of invention is conducted in terms closer to Agricola's.

After the case or question has been proposed, then we must consult the topics and run our mind through them, as Cicero says, so that arguments about the thing which we wish to explain or defend may be sought.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>37</sup> CR, XX, 749: 'Tota enim vis inventionis in locis posita est, ex quibus ceu fontibus oratio deduci solet. In omni themate quedam argumenta, ipsa statim natura ingeniosis hominibus sugerit, sed pauca, quae munienda, exornanda et amplificanda sunt plurimum locorum adminiculis...Et a dialecticis locis exoritur ceu fonte copia orationis.' As in 1519, Melanchthon views the topics as contributing to amplification, but he uses the language of the older model.

<sup>38</sup> In the preface to his commentary, Melanchthon says that Cicero's *Topica* parallels the second book of *De copia*. CR, XIII, 807, K. Meerhoff, 'The Significance', n. 1 above.

<sup>39</sup> *Institutiones rhetoricae* (Hagenau, 1521), a2r: 'Inventionem loci quidam continent, qui indicant de quovis themate, quid dicas, non inventur thema, sed proposito themate inveniuntur loci quibus ipsum vel muniatur, vel ornetur.'

<sup>40</sup> *Dialecticae libri IV*, pp. 49-55.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 107: 'postquam autem causa seu quaestio proposita est, tum demum consulendi sunt loci et pervolvendus in illis animus, ut inquit Cicero, ut eius rei quam volumus explicare, aut defendere, argumenta quaerantur.'

This is applied only to propositions, but it is still somewhat different from the idea that the main arguments arise naturally, while the topics are used for amplification. Agricola believed that the topics could be used for amplification, in the sense that the topics would always generate more arguments than one would actually employ in a particular work. However he thought that their principal use was to find the basic argumentative material of a work. The topics would generate a large number of arguments of which only the strongest would actually be used. Using the topics makes it more certain that one will actually find the strongest arguments.

In 1547 the preliminary questions have been increased to ten (listed above)<sup>42</sup> and transformed into the method. The method is applied to single words, but the topics are kept for the invention of arguments concerned with propositions.<sup>43</sup> This seems a rather artificial and face-saving distinction. In any case as the list of questions increases it becomes more like a summary version of the topics.

### Topics

Melanchthon sometimes introduces or concludes his presentation of the topics by commenting on other versions ('Concerning the topics, Cicero wrote most elegantly, Rudolph Agricola most fully') or by presenting his version as a preparation for a reading of one of the others.<sup>44</sup> In 1520 he has only ten topics.<sup>45</sup> The entries are very brief. First the topic is defined, then where necessary its divisions are indicated. Examples of arguments from the topic follow and at the end there is some advice on the use of each topic. There are no Boethian maxims, but some rules for use are given.<sup>46</sup> In structure and handling the topics entries resemble those in the first part of Cicero's *Topica*. Melanchthon uses Agricola's term *eventa*, but in an enlarged sense (on the model of Aristotelian views of causation), in that four outcomes are recognised instead of two.

In 1528 there are seventeen topics. As elsewhere he calls them 'topics of

---

<sup>42</sup> See note 28.

<sup>43</sup> *CR*, XIII, 573, 663.

<sup>44</sup> *De rhetorica libri tres* (1519), f3<sup>r</sup>: 'De locis elegantissime Cicero, copiosissime Rodolphus Agricola scripserunt.' *Dialecticae libri IV*, p. 4. *Rhetoricae elementa*, a2<sup>v</sup>. No one else calls Cicero's *Topica* elegant, nor can the word easily be applied to Cicero's other versions.

<sup>45</sup> Definition, Genus, Species, Particular, Differentia, Parts, Causes, Results, Repugnats, Similars. *CR*, XX, 756.

<sup>46</sup> *CR*, XX, 757: For example 'A genere ad species ducuntur argumenta per negationem.'

things' and treats them as parallel to the special topics of persons.<sup>47</sup> Definitions are brief and divisions few, but considerable attention is given to the kinds of arguments which can be made ('from definition one argues affirmatively and negatively...one also argues from the thing defined').<sup>48</sup> This recalls Boethius and Peter of Spain. There are also several literary examples (often from Scripture) of arguments from the topic given.

In his commentary (1545) on the first book of *Partitiones oratoriae*, Melanchthon comments on Agricola's rearrangement of the topics in the area of adjuncts.

In Rudolph Agricola there is a long discussion of adjuncts, in which he divides these topics somewhat differently. Some adjuncts he prefers to call *applicita*; time and place for example. Others are *connexa*; clothing for instance. Then he transfers part of adjuncts to the topic of contingents. In this way the Ciceronian spring is divided into many streams. But we should be content with Cicero's own division which is clear and simple. We understand adjuncts to be things which exist within the thing in question, either necessarily, or certainly in most cases.<sup>49</sup>

The topics are treated at much greater length in 1547 than they were in 1528. There are eight more topics, making a total of twenty-five. For the first time some topics in the adjacents/contingents area, to which Agricola added so much, appear.<sup>50</sup> There are more rules, and more (mostly different) examples, several of them set out in full syllogistic form. As before, they have a theological tinge and are often based on biblical passages. The style of the section is rather formal, even scholastic, as this example from the topic 'genus' may indicate.

<sup>47</sup> To the previous list are added: etymology, conjugates, four divisions of cause, two divisions of repugnats, examples, authorities and signs. The topic particulars is omitted, as is separate treatment of results. Melanchthon uses *loci rerum* to distinguish these topics from the *loci personarum* (birth, family, etc.). However Roman writers who combine the latter group (which I call special topics) with the usual list (general topics) have a separate class of *loci rerum* (where? when? by what means?). *Institutio oratoria*, 5.10.32-52, Cicero, *De Inventione*, 26.37-28.43.

<sup>48</sup> *Dialecticae Libri IV*, p. 118: 'Ducuntur argumenta a definitione affirmative ac negative...Ducuntur et a definito argumenta.'

<sup>49</sup> CR, XVI, 841-842: 'Longa est apud Rodolphum disputatio de adjunctis, in qua paulo alter hos locos partitur. Et quaedam adjuncta maluit dicere *adplicita*, ut locum et tempus: quaedam *connexa*, ut vestitum. Deinde partem adjunctorum transfert in locum, quem vocat *contingentium*. Ita ex uno fonte Ciceronis quasi plures rivulos ducit. Sed simus contenti Ciceronis distributione, quae perspicua est et facilis. Intelligamus adjuncta, quae in re proposita simul existunt, seu necessario, seu certe plerumque.' I am grateful to Kees Meerhoff for this reference.

<sup>50</sup> The new topics are: division, effect replacing results, antecedent, consequent (three subdivisions), adjuncts, *connexa*, common accidents, comparisons (equals, more, less). CR, XIII, 663.

First rule, the consequence always holds affirmatively and negatively, from the superior with the universal sign to the inferior, as  
 Every animal breathes, Therefore a fish breathes.<sup>51</sup>

The text is also more exhaustive and more philosophical. Ten divisions of the topic efficient cause are listed: natural/voluntary, total/partial, principal/subsidiary, near/remote, universal/particular, principal/instrumental, preparing/assisting, self-moved/moved by others, and two multiple divisions from the terminology of medicine which overlap with these.<sup>52</sup> Whilst this list absorbs many of the distinctions Cicero and Agricola (and for that matter Galen and Plato) made, it seems to be more formally exhaustive than helpful in understanding the variety of causal relations entailed and their comparative inferential force. That Melanchthon's final version of the topics moves simultaneously in the directions of greater formalism (the rules) and greater attention to particular circumstances (the divisions of the topic) is most easily understood as an eclectic pursuit of greater completeness.

The place of invention within the whole manual also varies. In 1520, as we have seen, part of invention was allotted to nature (or, as he terms the same process in 1547, the method). In the first dialectic three headings are recognised: definition, division and argumentation. Under argumentation, the syllogism is always described thoroughly, the other forms sketchily at first but more thoroughly with successive revisions.<sup>53</sup> Definition and division are always treated as important for understanding what is being argued about. At first the categories and the predicables are treated as part of definition.<sup>54</sup> In 1528 there are separate sections on the predicables and the categories alongside those on definition, division and argumentation. In 1547 these subjects are arranged (and other sections are added on the parts of the proposition, the copula, future contingents, and consequences) in a way that resembles the scholastic manuals. In both these later versions, more attention is given (following Aristotle) to demonstration, and the causes of certainty.<sup>55</sup>

Within the sections on aspects of dialectic other than invention there are

<sup>51</sup> *CR*, XIII, 665: 'Prima regula, A superiori cum signo universali ad inferius semper valet consequentia affirmative et negative. Affirmative, ut: Omne animal spirat, ergo piscis spirat.'

<sup>52</sup> *CR*, XIII, 673-679.

<sup>53</sup> In *Erotemata dialectices*, as well as the syllogism, enthymeme, induction, example, sorites, (various) consequences and hypothetical syllogism are discussed.

<sup>54</sup> *CR*, XX, 714, 720.

<sup>55</sup> *Dialecticae libri IV* (Lyons, 1534), pp. 111-115, *CR*, XIII, 647, 658.

sporadic references to ideas of Agricola. *Dialecticae libri IV* (1528) adds chapters on the use of each of the elements of dialectic. The categories are useful for making definitions and for finding arguments and finding the causes of things. Thinking about the proposition helps us focus our arguments. The study of argumentation helps us both search out what is really behind the eloquence of a speaker and avoid mistakes and inconsistencies in our own arguing.<sup>56</sup> These sections show Melanchthon thinking about how the traditional components of dialectic contribute to the real activity of using language.

Parts of these sections are similar to the advice Agricola gives about invention and dialectical reading. In *Dialecticae libri IV* Melanchthon makes up examples which show the relationship between syllogistic form and actual writing. He considers how to excavate formal structures of argument from persuasive discourse in order to be able to check the validity of the inference implied.<sup>57</sup>

In subject-matters traditionally associated with rhetoric, Melanchthon follows Agricola less. Thus amplification is dealt with by summary of and reference to *De copia*.<sup>58</sup> In disposition his only rule is to follow the law of nature (which is: *exordium*, narration, confirmation, conclusion).<sup>59</sup> In putting arguments in order, common things come first and particulars follow. At the end of his career, as he had been throughout, Melanchthon was committed to the idea that rhetoric and dialectic belong together. In his contribution to the Pico/Barbaro quarrel, the reply to Pico which he wrote in 1558, he insists that the two arts were established as counterparts and are joined together by their very nature. One of them shows the method of teaching, the other the words in which things are to be explained. He insists that far from being a form of decoration, the most elegant style is the appropriate explanation of things. Agricola's term exposition appears directly in the second of these passages and in a derived form in the first.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>56</sup> *Dialecticae libri IV*, pp. 36, 57-59, 66

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 66-67.

<sup>58</sup> *De Rhetorica libri Tres*, p4<sup>V</sup>.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 03<sup>T</sup>, *Institutiones rhetoricae*, c1<sup>V</sup>, *Rhetorices Elementa*, d5<sup>V</sup>-6<sup>T</sup>.

<sup>60</sup> CR, IX, 691: 'Itaque duas artes constituerunt inter se cognatas, Dialecticen et Rhetoricen, quarum altera docendi viam monstrat, altera doceat, quo verborum genere res exponendas sint. Quis autem non videt haec inter se natura coniuncta esse'; 697: 'hoc commune erratum est, quod elocutionem iudicias esse delicias quasdam, non ad utilitatem ac necessitatem comparatas, nos contra ornatum praecipuum esse propriam rerum expositionem.' See chapter 3, note 80 above. In a forthcoming article in *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* (1992) E. Rümmel shows that the reply to Pico was written by one of Melanchthon's pupils. I am grateful to Judith Henderson for this information.

There is no doubt that Melanchthon read *De inventione dialectica* carefully and repeatedly. Different details from it appear in all his works on dialectic. But it would be wrong to say that he followed it closely, or to imply that a student who had read Melanchthon on dialectic would thereby have been introduced to the doctrines of Agricola. Melanchthon treats him as a guide to a general view of dialectic, but the exact configuration he gives that view changes considerably. He speaks of him as a source for the topics and invention, but even in those areas he frequently takes a different line, opposing him or ignoring his views. With successive revisions Melanchthon's dialectic contains fewer Agricolan elements and comes to include more elements from Aristotelian and scholastic manuals. Perhaps Melanchthon was coming closer to Aristotelian dialectic, or perhaps these changes were connected with the need to fit all necessary dialectic teaching into one book. This would enable Melanchthon to reduce the time spent on dialectic, making room in the syllabus for other subjects.

The changes Melanchthon makes are not entirely consistent. As he made his own dialectic more comprehensive, in an eclectic way, he concentrated more on short-cuts (the method) and on rules. But he also gave more examples from real language and argument in order to help the students move on from language skills to literature, philosophy, science and theology. This general aim was sympathetic to Agricola and other humanist dialecticians. Reports on Melanchthon's teaching emphasize the importance he attached to dialectical and rhetorical analysis of his texts and to imitation and variation of classical and more recent writing.<sup>61</sup> Perhaps it is in his practical teaching that we can explain the apparent discrepancy between Melanchthon's praise of Agricola, including the claim that his own reading was materially aided by him, and the unexpectedly small use he actually makes of the detail of his work.

---

<sup>61</sup> K. Hartfelder ed., *Melanchthoniana paedagogica* (Leipzig, 1892), pp. 202-203: 'Discunt dialecticae nervos et κρίτια eaque ad omnes facultates applicant, quia et docendi et discendi optima est methodus dialectica. Discunt rhetorica et quasi anatomen orationum summorum in mundo oratorum, et ut ipsi quoque incipient meliori ordine, nervosius atque ornatus de rebus necessariis disserere. Hic praeit Philippus retexendis veterum orationibus et monstrandis et coagmentatione omnium partium et contexendis novis et elegantibus orationibus de rebus veteribus ac recentibus.'

## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

### RAMUS

According to several literary historians of the mid-twentieth century, Pierre de la Ramée (1515-1572) simplified logic, made it useful and thereby increased its prestige.<sup>1</sup> To Father Ong and the historians of humanist logic who followed him, Ramus was an intellectual disaster, a superficial oversimplifier who in places succeeded in wiping out the Aristotelian tradition in logic.<sup>2</sup> What is not in doubt is the immense publication of Ramist texts, particularly between 1570 and 1630, and the connection between Ramism and extreme Protestantism. Thus although many Protestants, Melanchthon included, were opposed to Ramism, the principal English Ramists were Puritans, and in Puritan New England Ramism appears almost to have displaced Aristotelianism.<sup>3</sup>

Whether or not Ramus actually chose as the thesis to defend for his MA thesis 'whatever Aristotle said was false', as his biographer Freigius claims, he evidently founded his work in logic on opposition to Aristotle right from the beginning.<sup>4</sup> He published a series of dialectic textbooks in which he evolved a very much simplified version of the traditional syllabus in logic. Like Agricola he restricted rhetoric to style and delivery. Ramus's friend Omer Talon wrote rhetoric textbooks which dovetail with Ramus's dialectic. Talon also wrote commentaries on Ramus's works, but they

---

<sup>1</sup> R. Tuve, *Elizabethan and Metaphysical Imagery* (Chicago, 1947), pp. 280-281, citing T. W. Baldwin, Hardin Craig and Perry Miller.

<sup>2</sup> A. Grafton and L. Jardine, *From Humanism to the Humanities* (London, 1986), p. 161, citing E. J. Ashworth, C. B. Schmitt, N. W. Gilbert, W. S. Howell and L. Jardine.

<sup>3</sup> R. Tuve, *Elizabethan*, pp. 331-332, P. Miller, *The New England Mind in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass., 1939), pp. 118-123.

<sup>4</sup> J. Freigius, 'Petri Rami vita', in P. Ramus, *Praelectiones in Ciceronis orationes octo consulares...* (Basel, 1575), p. 13. On Ramus's life: C. Waddington, *Ramus: sa vie, ses écrits et ses opinions* (Paris, 1855). A good general account: C. Vasoli, *La dialettica e la retorica dell' Umanesimo* (Milan, 1968), pp. 333-601, P. Sharratt, 'The present state of studies on Ramus', *Studi Francesi*, 47-8 (1972), pp. 201-213, 'Peter Ramus and the Reform of the University' in P. Sharratt ed., *French Renaissance Studies 1540-70* (Edinburgh, 1976), pp. 4-20 (p. 5). Waddington, pp. 28-30. See also P. Sharratt, 'Recent Work on Ramus', *Rhetorica*, 5 (1987), pp. 7-58, and the special Ramus number of *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques*, 70, no.1 (January, 1986), pp. 2-100.

always worked so closely together that Talon's own contribution is hard to disentangle from his friend's. Ramus continued to issue new commentaries by Talon after the latter's death. In addition to these textbooks in rhetoric and dialectic, Ramus wrote various controversial works and commentaries, justifying his positions and attacking the traditional authorities, Aristotle, Cicero and Quintilian. In later versions of these works he argued that his own views were founded on, and were the true interpretation of, Aristotle's most significant pronouncements. The errors arose from Aristotle's failure to follow his own principles, and from the mistakes of his followers. Ramus also published many lectures, commentaries on classical texts and proposals for educational reform.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> The bibliographical and critical work of Nelly Bruyère and Kees Meerhoff (see note 7 below) has made it clear that the history of the composition and publication of Ramus's works is more complex than was previously thought. Bruyère proposes five stages for the publication of his dialectic books, Meerhoff eight stages for the rhetoric. His stages (apart from the very important stage of publications after Ramus's death) can be compressed into four, which correspond roughly to the second to fifth stages of Bruyère. Since I have not been able to make the journeys to continental Europe required to ensure complete coverage of all their stages, I should make it clear that my observations on Ramus's use of Agricola are based on the published works of Bruyère and Meerhoff and on the editions listed below. I think it would be very worthwhile for one British library to obtain the microfilms which would enable students to obtain a complete picture of the development of Ramist rhetoric and dialectic. The editions I have used are:

1. *Dialecticae institutiones* (2nd edition) Paris 1543 (Ong 2), facsimile Stuttgart 1964. The dialectic at the second stage.
2. *Aristotelicae animadversiones*, Paris 1545 (Ong 19). Identical with the first appearance of the controversial work on dialectic at the second stage.
3. *Institutionum dialecticarum libri III*, Paris 1547 (Ong 4). The dialectic at the third stage.
4. *Animadversionum Aristotelicarum libri XX*, Paris 1548 (Ong 21). The controversial work on dialectic at the third stage.
5. *Dialectique*, Paris 1555 (Ong 237), ed. M. Dassonville, Geneva 1964. The French language dialectic which opens the fourth stage.
6. *Dialecticae libri duo Audomari Talaei paelectionibus illustrati*, Paris 1560 (Ong 240). The fourth stage Latin text, with the expanded fourth stage commentary.
7. *Scholae in liberales artes*, Basel 1569 (Ong 695), facsimile Hildesheim 1970. The final stage of the controversial work on rhetoric and dialectic. Identical with stage four. I have not used any earlier stages of the controversial work on rhetoric.
8. *Dialectica Audomari Talaei paelectionibus illustrata*, Cologne 1573 (Ong 248). This represents the first part of the fifth stage of the textbook, with the fifth stage of the commentary.
9. *Dialecticae libri duo*, Paris 1574 (Ong 254). This is the second part of the fifth stage of the textbook.
10. O. Talon, *Rhetoricae P. Rami paelectionibus observata*, Frankfurt (A. Wechel), 1581 (Ong 95).

These copies omit: the whole of the first stage (the manuscript and the early 1543 edition of *Partitiones dialecticae*), the earliest stage of the commentary (stage III, 1550-54), all but the last stage of the controversial work in rhetoric, and the whole development of the rhetoric textbook, which was not really germane to my purposes. In general I have based what I say

Ramus understood the need to make his views known. He preferred to be contentious. He took advantage of the power of printing. He enlisted followers. Even though he consciously created the conditions for posthumous fame and influence, the manner of it might have surprised him. Because he was murdered in the St Bartholomew's day massacre he became a Protestant martyr, and most of his subsequent publication took place in Frankfurt.<sup>6</sup> We now have excellent studies from Meerhoff and Bruyère of the development of Ramus's rhetoric and dialectic in his lifetime.<sup>7</sup> We still need studies of the commentaries and editions published after his death. In this chapter I am concerned with Ramus's use of Agricola.<sup>8</sup>

### *Ramus's Rhetoric and Dialectic*

The chief characteristic of Ramus's mature textbooks is the clarity and simplicity of their organisation. In each case he begins with a definition of the subject concerned, followed by a division of the subject. Then he defines one of the things arrived at by division before dividing it in turn. He proceeds through successive definitions and divisions until he reaches the lowest level, at which he provides examples of the thing in question. Then he follows in order the other branches of the tree diagram he has thus constructed. Each subject is organised to make a single diagram. Irrevelancies and redundancies in his sources are ruthlessly pruned.

---

about the controversial works on the *Scholae*. I have made some comparisons with its earlier versions in dialectic but have not studied them thoroughly.

<sup>6</sup> I. McLean, 'Andreas Wechel at Frankfurt', *Gutenberg-Jahrbuch*, 1988, pp. 146-76, also his 'Philosophical Books', chapter 13, n. 51 above.

<sup>7</sup> N. Bruyère, *Méthode et dialectique dans l'œuvre de La Ramée* (Paris, 1984), K. Meerhoff, *Rhétorique et poétique au XVIIe siècle en France* (Leiden, 1986), part 3, 'L'évolution de la rhétorique Ramiste', pp. 175-330. Bruyère's bibliographical data are available at the Centre d'Histoire des Sciences et des Doctrines (C.N.R.S., Paris) and the Centre de la Renaissance in Tours. For descriptions of particular editions Ong's *Ramus and Talon Inventory* (Cambridge, Mass., 1958), which Bruyère criticizes severely, will remain useful until her bibliography becomes more accessible.

<sup>8</sup> I begin with a discussion of the nature of Ramus's textbooks and controversial works. Then I consider *testimonia*, Ramus's general debt to Agricola, his use of particular details from Agricola, and the topics. After a summary on Ramus's use of Agricola, I consider Ramus's place in sixteenth-century dialectic more generally.

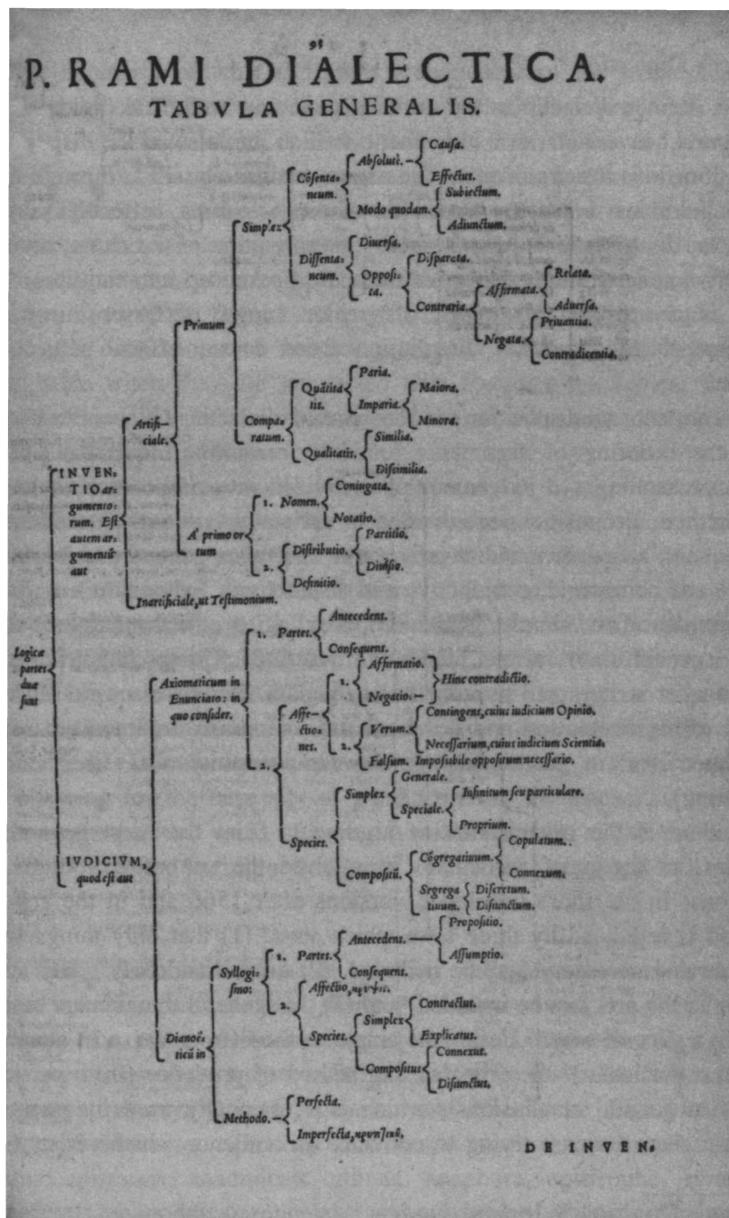


Plate 1 Scheme of Ramus's dialectic from P. Ramus, *Professio Regia*, ed. J. T. Freigius (Basel, 1576), p. 81, reproduced by permission of the British Library.

*Ramus's Dialectic*

Ramus defines dialectic as the art of discoursing well.<sup>9</sup> He divides it into two parts, invention and judgement (which he also calls disposition). Invention finds the arguments. The arguments are classified through a tree of dichotomies into ten types (the topics): causes, effects, subjects, adjuncts, disagreements, comparisons, interpretation of the name, division, definition and testimony. Some of these are broken up into subtypes. Thus there is comparison of equals, of greater things, of lesser things, and similitudes, and there is distribution from cause, effect, subject and adjunct.

Judgement, or disposition, is the part of dialectic which is concerned with the ordering of arguments found by invention, to make possible correct reasoning and judgement. It is divided into proposition, syllogism and method. Propositions are divided in various ways (e.g. antecedent and consequent, affirmative and negative, true and false, general and particular, simple and compound, conjunctive and disjunctive). Syllogisms are divided into compound and simple. Under simple syllogism, the three figures of the syllogism with their various moods are described. Compound syllogism is what earlier writers call hypothetical syllogism. Ramus discusses no other forms of argumentation and he shows no interest in arguments based on likelihood (or in distinguishing between certainty and likelihood in reasoning).

Method is the organisation of arguments from the most general, by degrees, to the most particular. It involves the use of definitions and divisions. In the more developed versions after 1566 and in the *scholae*, method is regulated by three laws which state: (1) that only things which are true and necessary may be included, (2) that all and only things which belong to the art must be included, and (3) that general things must be dealt with in a general way.<sup>10</sup> Beside the single method (from the most general to the most particular), there is also the method of prudence (from particular things to general conclusions), which is occasionally used by poets and orators when they are trying to convince an audience which resists being

---

<sup>9</sup> *Dialectique* (1555) ed. M. Dassonville (Geneva, 1964), p. 61: 'Dialectique est art de bien disputer'; *Dialecticae libri duo* (1560): 'Dialectica est ars bene disserendi.' Further references to Ramus editions will be given by short title and date. Fuller references are in note 5 above. In 1543 the definition was 'virtus disserendi', A5<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>10</sup> Ramus 1555, pp. 144-145 notes, Ramus 1573, pp. 225-226, 230-243, 364-417 (364-370), Ramus 1574, D2<sup>v</sup>-3<sup>v</sup>, E4<sup>v</sup>-5<sup>r</sup>, *Scholae dialecticae* (1569), 31, Bruylère, p. 199, Vasoli, pp. 550-562, 582-589.

persuaded.

This summary of what is Ramus's equivalent of the whole *Organon* indicates the clarity and simplicity of the system he has produced. He has removed everything which is connected with metaphysics and semantics, by insisting first that dialectic must treat only what belongs to it and second that everything it teaches must be of use in ordinary reasoning. Since dialectic is about using reasoning, its first section must deal only with finding arguments, and its second section only with organising them. *Isagoge*, *Categories*, *Topica* and parts of *Prior Analytics* are found to be inadequate discussions of invention. A few elements from them are salvageable when they are connected with Ramus's ten topics. Ramus's simplification of dialectic and his use of the criterion of usefulness are in line with the standard humanist attack on scholastic logic from Petrarch to Vives (and including Valla, Agricola and a number of humanist Aristotelians). Ramus applies the ideas more severely and more widely to make a drastic reduction in the traditional syllabus of dialectic.

It can be objected that later versions of Ramus's dialectic are so tied down to 'methodical' tree-diagram organisation that they offer little help to the person who wants to find out how to use dialectic, that setting out the whole subject on a single side of paper puts the triumph of organisation before the use of teaching. While acknowledging the force of this criticism (which people commonly make on first encountering a Ramist manual), and allowing for the necessity of guidance from the teacher, a reply can point out the positive value of having a relatively short syllabus which can actually be covered in full, and of being able to see the subject as a whole.

### *Ramus's Rhetoric*

For Ramus, rhetoric is the art of speaking well. This involves ornate and correct speaking, and skilful delivery.<sup>11</sup> Since accuracy of speech is the province of grammar, rhetoric begins with the ornate. The first part of rhetoric consists of the tropes and figures. Ramus finds that there are only four tropes: metonymy, irony, metaphor and synecdoche. Figures of words consist of dimension (prosody and prose rhythm) and repetition (ten figures: epizeuxis, anadiplosis, climax, anaphora, epistrophe, symploce, epanalepsis, epanodos, paronomasia and polyptoton). Figures of sentence

---

<sup>11</sup> *A Talaei Rhetorica e P. Rami pralectionibus illustrata* (Frankfurt, A. Wechel, 1581), Ong no. 95, a4<sup>r</sup>: 'Rhetorica est ars bene dicendi'; a4<sup>v</sup>: 'Partes rhetoricae duo sunt, elocutio et pronuntiatio. Elocutio est exornatio orationis, eaque per se plurimum potest.'

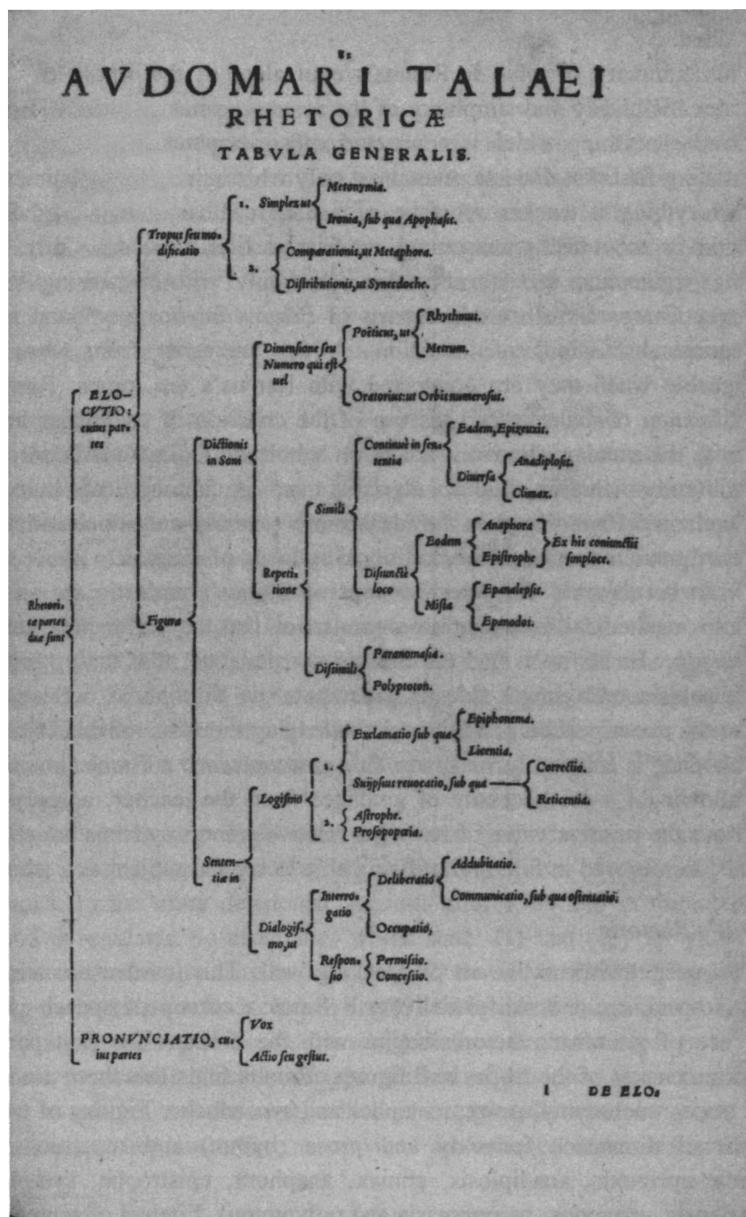


Plate 2      Scheme of Ramus's rhetoric from P. Ramus, *Professio Regia*, ed. J. T. Freigius (Basel, 1576), p. 95, reproduced by permission of the British Library.

express intentions of the mind: exclamation, epanorthosis, aposiopsis, apostrophe, prosopopeia, *addubitatio*, *communicatio*, *praeoccupatio*, *subjectio*, *permissio*, and *concessio*.<sup>12</sup> Delivery contains suggestions on the tones of voice to be used for different effects, and on suitable gestures for head and hands.

The key moves here are the restriction of rhetoric to delivery and the figures (assigning to dialectic and grammar elements usually found in rhetorics) and the simplification of what remains. It is easy to prepare four tropes and twenty-one figures, but Ramus's simplification results in a considerable loss of expressive force. The figures needed to be reorganised but not to be reduced as drastically as this. When considering Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria*, Ramus specifically rejected the attention given there to status theory and the four-part oration, on the grounds that these parts of the art were not universal but belonged exclusively to the context of the Roman law courts for which the earliest Latin rhetorics were composed.<sup>13</sup>

Most students of rhetoric would consider that Ramus has thrown out a great deal that was valuable in the rhetoric textbooks. But it could be replied that he has confronted the difficulties posed by the excessive dominance of the four-part oration, and by technicalities intended for the law courts.

#### *Ramus's Controversial works*

The method of Ramus's controversial works, *Brutinae quaestiones*, *Rhetoricae distinctiones in Quintilianum*, and *Aristotelicae animadversiones* is to go through the works selected (*Orator*, *Institutio oratoria*, and the *Organon* with Porphyry's *Isagoge*, respectively) pointing out what has been omitted and what is superfluous compared with a strict treatment of the subject. Thus he nearly always begins each book by complaining that his author has not defined his subject and divided it. Equally he often criticizes the works he is reading for confused organisation and for including material that is not required, either because it belongs to other subjects or because it is useless.

The first impression one receives in reading these controversial works, particularly those on rhetoric, which did not undergo massive revision, is

---

<sup>12</sup> It is noticeable that Ramus and Talon favour Latin terms here in the figures of thought, and Greek ones in the list of figures of speech above.

<sup>13</sup> P. Ramus, *Scholae rhetoricae*, 328, 361 in *Scholae in liberales artes* (Basel, 1569, repr. Hildesheim, 1970). I cite in this rather odd manner because this volume has two sequences of column numbers.

that Ramus's purpose in analysing the works of other authors is merely self-justificatory. He is not interested in what his authors actually say; he simply criticizes them for not having written his own books. Further reading, particularly on dialectic, tempers this view a little. By the end of the process of revising *Aristotelicae animadversiones* Ramus evidently had a wide knowledge of Aristotle (some of which he owed to the sixteenth-century defenders of Aristotle who attacked him).

His criticism is not entirely arbitrary but follows a general theory which is based on his three principles of method,<sup>14</sup> the division of dialectic into invention and judgement, and a stringent requirement that dialectic must not be occupied with arguing about its own principles but must teach things which can be applied in practical reasoning.<sup>15</sup> From these points Ramus's admittedly bizarre interpretation of Aristotle can be deduced.

Further, at least some of Ramus's criticisms respond to difficulties in his authors. The early books of the *Organon* evidently are more metaphysical than logical, but because they are written for the sake of the logic which follows they involve jumps and assumptions which would need more analysis in a book devoted entirely to metaphysics. Lecture notes show that discussions of the category of quantity in practice led to remarks about different mathematical and physical topics, as Ramus feared.<sup>16</sup> Equally, there is reduplication in the *Organon*, and Ramus explains the circumstances of the volume's compilation in mitigation and justification of this fact. Any reader is bound to agree that Cicero's *Orator* is poorly organised. Even if Ramus is unfair in treating it as a *summa* of rhetoric, Cicero brings this treatment on himself by getting involved in material outside the original scope of the work. Ramus is correct in saying that *Institutio oratoria* repeats material.

But the first impression ought to remain predominant. Ramus entirely misses Aristotle's philosophical subtlety and thoughtfulness. He applies his own principles to other men's books in an unfair and pointless way. His employment of the criterion of usefulness is crude and reductive.

The most important programmatic point to emerge from Meerhoff's and Bruyère's work is that Ramus's various texts on each subject, his

---

<sup>14</sup> See note 10 above.

<sup>15</sup> *Scholae dialecticae*, 53, 67-74, *ibid*, *Scholae in liberales artes*, o2<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>16</sup> An example would be the notes on substance and quantity in a Cambridge University Library copy of the 1574 edition of Seton's *Dialectica*, Peterbor F 431, C7<sup>r</sup>-E4<sup>r</sup>. This copy also divides the text into portions for lectures, which suggests that most attention was given to the categories.

textbooks, commentaries, and works of controversy, have to be studied together in series in order to understand the evolution of his work. Time and again they find that a new doctrine appears in one of his textbooks as a result of some development in his criticism of his predecessors, or in response to the attacks made on him by his opponents in controversy. They both insist that at almost every stage criticism precedes creation. The parallel study of the evolution of Ramus's different works on dialectic also shows that much of the material which appears to be dropped from the textbook is not cancelled altogether but ends up being reincorporated in the commentaries or the controversial works. While the dialectic textbook becomes more and more sparse, losing its examples and its discussions of practice and analysis, the emphasis in the *scholae* on the authors, practice, analysis, and use becomes stronger. A recent analysis of some Parisian lecture notes by A. Grafton indicates, as Kees Meerhoff has pointed out, that in this case the teaching of the relatively bare outline of the dialectic textbook has been filled out with arguments developed in the *scholae*.<sup>17</sup> We do not know whether or not this was usual, but it may well have been.

### *Testimonia*

In the preface to his lectures on the first three liberal arts, Ramus wonders at the state of dialectic in Germany.

Rudolph Agricola was the first after the happy times of Greece and Rome to reawaken that important use of logical skill, so that young people should learn from poets and orators, not only to speak correctly and elegantly, but how to think acutely and judge prudently on matters placed before them. Johann Sturm first brought these fruits of dialectic, as important as they are lovely, out of the school of Agricola to Paris, and he inflamed the most eminent of universities with an incredible desire for such unexpected usefulness...so that the tender age became by the example and imitation of the best logicians, quicker in wit to consider and survey any matter, more mature in judgement to discern and determine it. Thus, extraordinary praise for Agricola arose through the whole of Germany; but in most universities the praise consisted only of words. In practice and in deed almost no one imitates Agricola.<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> A. Grafton, 'Teacher, Text and Pupil in the Renaissance Classroom', *History of Universities*, 1 (1981), pp. 37-70. K. Meerhoff, *Rhétorique et poétique*, pp. 320-321.

<sup>18</sup> P. Ramus, *Scholae in liberales artes*, a2v: 'Rodolphus Agricola primus omnium post beata Graeciae Italiaeque tempora eximum illum logicae facultatis usum revocavit, ut juvenus a poetis et oratoribus diseret non solum pure loqui et ornate dicere, sed de propositis rebus acute cogitare prudenterque judicare. Hos dialecticos tam insignes tamque amabiles fructus Ioannes Sturmius ex Agricolae schola Lutetiam Parisiorum primus attulit, academiamque academiarum principem incredibili tam insperatae utilitatis desiderio

In the fourth book of his lectures on dialectic, Ramus considered the previous works which had made his dialectic possible. Cicero and Quintilian had divided logic into invention and judgement. They had concentrated on invention and disposition, but when he looked through all other dialectic books he found nothing except what was extracted and abridged from Aristotle. He could not find a more convenient teaching which would lead to practical use.

Agricola alone among so many writers perceived the usefulness of logic for humanity and taught a logic directed to it, but he only set out a part of the art. Most people praised Agricola as an excellent logician. No one, as far as I know, imitated the logical practice in the whole art.<sup>19</sup>

In a letter to Theodore Zwinger of 23 January 1570, Ramus tells of a discussion with the prince after giving a lecture on *Pro Marcello* at Heidelberg. He speaks of himself bringing back to Heidelberg the legitimate daughter of the university, that is the true dialectic taught by Rudolph Agricola.<sup>20</sup>

These quotations proclaim Agricola as the direct inspiration of Ramus's innovations in dialectic. His claim that Agricola was more praised than followed fits in with some of the evidence I have collected, but it also serves his polemical point that only he has understood the masters of logic correctly. He specifies three main points of influence: the need for dialectic to be practical, the use of the best authors (in the humanist sense) for examples in instruction and imitation, and the focus on invention. These are undoubtedly three key elements of Ramus's dialectic.

### *Ramus's originality and his borrowings*

One of the points Bruyère stresses most is Ramus's originality and

---

inflammavit...nempe ut tenera aetas fieret exemplo et imitatione summorum logicorum ingenio promptior ad pervidendum quid libet cogitandumque, judicioque maturior ad decernendum ac judicandum. Itaque mirabiles Agricolae laudes per universam Germaniam exortae sunt, sed in academias plerisque omnibus verborum laudes tantum fuerunt: re ipsa et opere nemo Agricolam imitatur.'

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, (second sequence) 154: 'Unus Agricola inter tot scriptores usum humanitatis illum perspexit, eoque logicam referendam docuit; sed artis partem tantum explicavit. Agricolam plerique ut excellentem logicum laudarunt: logicam Agricolae exercitationem in tota arte imitatus est (quod sciām) nemo.'

<sup>20</sup> Waddington, *Ramus*, pp. 424-425: 'Respondi dialecticam esse filiam illam, quae Heidelbergae incredibili non Germanarū modo, sed Gallorum et Italorum admiratione ab Agricola restituta esset. Quid vis amplius? Addidi Agricolae cinera et epitaphium illud ab Hermolao Barbaro tam nobile in cella lignaria iacere, nec ideo alienum doctoribus istis videri ut eodem oblivionis sepulchro Agricolae filia contegeretur.' Ong, *Ramus, Method and the Decay of Dialogue* (Cambridge, Mass., 1958), pp. 330-331. K. Meerhoff, 'Agricola et Ramus - dialectique et rhétorique', *Rodolphus Agricola Phrisius*, pp. 270-280 (270-271).

consistency. She points out that, even when he changes his attitude towards Aristotle, it is more a case of Ramus finding (or twisting) things in Aristotle to fit his view about method than a real shift in his own position.<sup>21</sup> Similarly, although he himself draws attention to certain Platonic sources, they are sources only in a general way, and what Ramus takes from them reflects an original view of method (and also perhaps the views of his teacher, Johann Sturm) rather than anything which anyone else's exegesis would have discovered in Plato. It should be added that Bruyère helps her case for Ramus's originality by concentrating on method<sup>22</sup> rather than on invention, the proposition or the syllogism, where he says less that is new or striking, and where there are some surprising changes of mind. Nevertheless there is an important truth in her picture of Ramus as someone who finds his own ideas in his reading of other people more than he changes his views through real contact with theirs.

That said, there are some central themes of Ramus's dialectic in which he follows Agricola: the division of subject-matter between rhetoric and dialectic, in which invention and disposition belong to dialectic, style and delivery to rhetoric; the division of dialectic into invention and judgement; the emphasis on teaching only what can be useful; the view of dialectic as a training in the use of language and the employment of literary examples. One could represent Ramus as taking some of Agricola's ideas further than Agricola does himself. Ramus throws out the Aristotelian predicables and categories on the grounds that they have nothing to do with invention. Where Agricola had stated that dialectic consists of invention and judgement, and had actually dealt with invention and disposition, postponing detailed consideration of judgement to another treatise, Ramus resolves matters by making disposition (later, method) part of judgement. Thus he integrates two levels of arrangement (argumentation and disposition) which Agricola had left awkwardly unconnected, except in his discussion of dialectical reading. In another way, though, their positions can be considered to be very different, almost opposed. Agricola gives the highest importance to the topics and to understanding their complexity.

---

<sup>21</sup> N. Bruyère, *Méthode et dialectique*, pp. 113, 118, 156, 304-305.

<sup>22</sup> Bruyère has now written on invention in Ramus. Her main point is that invention is where observation, experience, practice and induction enter Ramus's system. She finds that these are not entirely integrated with the *a priori* approach of the method, which she regards as Ramus's most important contribution. This might mean that she is prepared to see the section on invention as more Agricolan, though she does not say so. N. Bruyère-Robinet, 'Le statut de l'invention dans l'œuvre de La Ramée', *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques*, 70 (1986), pp. 15-24.

Ramus thinks they are important, but he takes them for granted. In pursuit of simplicity he prefers a very direct and dogmatic statement of the topics, more like Cicero, or even Boethius, than Agricola.<sup>23</sup>

Ramus's definitions of dialectic are very consistent. It is not a long way from 'power of discoursing' (*virtus disserendi*, 1543) to 'art of discoursing well' (*ars bene disserendi*, 1574), though the latter form is closer to the definition which Antonius quotes from Diogenes in Cicero's *De oratore*.<sup>24</sup> Agricola defines dialectic as 'the art of discoursing convincingly on any given matter, so far as its nature can be found capable of conviction'.<sup>25</sup> The essential action is represented by *disserrere*, but Agricola attempts to narrow down the definition of 'well' in such a way as to exclude the special concerns of grammar and rhetoric. Ramus always refused to speak of likelihood in connection with dialectic because he disapproved of Aristotle's attempt to divide probable and certain reasoning between two separate subjects.<sup>26</sup> Like Agricola, Ramus thought that the same techniques of argument applied to certain and plausible subject-matters.

Agricola said that dialectic prepares the reader to speak on any subject, and that the main aim of dialectic is to teach. He gave less attention to dialectic's role in describing the discovery and organisation of the other arts. Ramus agrees with the emphasis on teaching and language, but he makes the second claim more strongly when he says that dialectic provides the procedure and structure of the other arts.<sup>27</sup>

Their views on the organisation of material illustrate a difference in emphasis between these two aspects. Agricola suggested a variety of forms of organisation, based on literary structures (epics, histories and speeches) as well as on the organisation of textbooks. Ramus's approach to disposition is far more unitary, based on chains of reasoning. For him the chief model becomes the tree diagram illustrating the connections between

---

<sup>23</sup> The relationship between Ramus and Agricola is considered by N. Bruyère, *Méthode*, pp. 112-113, 305-308, and by K. Meerhoff, n. 20 above. P. Radouant, 'L'union de l'éloquence et de la philosophie au temps de Ramus', *Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France*, 31 (1924), pp. 161-192 (182-192).

<sup>24</sup> Citing from Ramus in this section, I shall give dates and folio numbers only. Ramus 1543, A5<sup>r</sup>, 1574, a3<sup>r</sup>. Cicero, *De Oratore*, 2.38.157. For editions used see note 5 above.

<sup>25</sup> *DID*, p. 193: 'ars probabiliter de qualibet re proposita disserendi, prout cuiusque natura capax esse fidei poterit.'

<sup>26</sup> *Scholae dialecticae*, 35-51, in *Scholae in liberales artes* (Basel, 1569).

<sup>27</sup> *DID*, pp. 209-212. Ramus 1560, A5<sup>v</sup>: 'Dialectica enim generales ratiocinandi, id est inveniendi et iudicandi leges tradit, quibus reliquae artes communiter utuntur.' 1573, A4<sup>v</sup>, A8<sup>r</sup>, 1555, p. 62 make similar points.

general ideas and their particular realisations or applications.<sup>28</sup> With time the discussions of linguistic practice and the literary examples are reduced (though the French language *Dialectique* (1555), and his involvement with the vernacular are an important counter-movement). By the end, literary uses of language are associated with the second method, the concealed method conceded to poets and orators when they are trying to do something other than teach, such as move, please or secure victory.<sup>29</sup> This partial separation between literary structures and teaching (even the separation between moving, pleasing and teaching) is the opposite of the position adopted at the beginning of *De inventione dialectica*.

Especially in his earlier dialectics, Ramus makes a distinction between natural dialectic, the human faculty of arguing, and artificial dialectic, the systematic teaching which imitates natural dialectic.<sup>30</sup> The chief source for this distinction lies in Ramus's Platonism, but it may also be connected with remarks Agricola makes at the beginning of *De inventione dialectica*. He used the fact that some people have a greater natural aptitude for discovering arguments quickly to argue that those who had invented the topics had performed a useful service, since through training in the topics anyone can acquire greater ease and speed in finding arguments. Later he made similar connections between the topics and the natural workings of the mind when he described them as the headings into which connections are sorted, and when he equated skill with the topics to prudence. Dialectical training can make an ordinary mind quicker just as natural aptitude can. Dialectic can achieve this because it analyses and makes conscious the types of associative leap which minds make naturally.<sup>31</sup> This is not the only way to read Agricola's ideas, but one can understand how, read like this, they might contribute to Ramus's system.

In *Institutiones dialecticae* (September 1543), Ramus introduced the discussion of topics through the idea of the question:

A question is an utterance which questions and interrogates a matter in doubt. When the question has been posed, we use the device of art to explain it...Artificial invention will be the art of finding that by which the

<sup>28</sup> As Ramus becomes more determined to prove that there is only one method, he concentrates more and more on the tree diagram and gives less prominence to the method of prudence. Bruyère, *Méthode*, pp. 99-100, 118, 139, 141, 168-173, Meerhoff, 'Agricola et Ramus', *RAP*, pp. 278-280.

<sup>29</sup> Ramus 1560, P2<sup>r</sup>-P4<sup>v</sup>, 1574, e7<sup>v</sup>-8<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>30</sup> Ramus 1543, a3<sup>v</sup>, a6<sup>r</sup>-7<sup>v</sup>, 8<sup>v</sup>, 1547, a1<sup>v</sup>, 1560, a6<sup>r-v</sup>, N. Bruyère, *Méthode*, pp. 206-210, 219-220, 233-237.

<sup>31</sup> *DID*, pp. 2, 9.

question is drawn out and expounded. That thing by which the question is drawn out and expounded is called the argument: what argues, that is, proves and demonstrates the thing: thus Virgil in the fourth book of the *Aeneid*,

Fear argues degenerate souls.<sup>32</sup>

Since such matters as causes, effects, subjects, adjuncts, things disagreeing and others arising from them naturally spring to mind when something is being considered, the art of dialectic will instruct us to use these headings to look into both parts of the question.<sup>33</sup>

In this version of the dialectic, as in Agricola, the question is the key sentence which forms the verbal starting point for topical invention. The arguments found by invention are here identified as middle terms through which the question can be elucidated. Agricola had named the question as the subject-matter of dialectic, and had made it the key to dialectical reading. According to Nelly Bruyère, Ramus's manuscript and the first printed edition gave even more emphasis to the question.<sup>34</sup> Besides emphasizing the question, the passage I have quoted and summarised above gives some practical instruction (much reduced in comparison with Agricola) on how to go through the topics searching for arguments.

In 1547, this section of the textbook has been shortened and made closer to the introduction to the topics Cicero gives in *Partitiones oratoriae*. It is necessary to know the precepts of invention thoroughly and to practise using them. Some of them are more suitable than others. The topics may arise from either part of the question.<sup>35</sup> In 1555, and afterwards, the discussion of the question is omitted and the division of dialectic leads directly to the division of the topics. In some versions a consideration of rival authorities is interpolated between them.

The earlier versions of Ramus's dialectic contain a third book on practice. In 1543, there are a number of instructions for interpretation as well as some worked examples. The procedure of determining the question

<sup>32</sup> Ramus 1543, A8<sup>r-v</sup>: 'Quaestio igitur est oratio, quae dubiam rem quaerit, atque interrogat...ubi quaestio posita est, ad eius explicationem doctrinae consilii utimur...Artificiosa itaque erit inventio doctrina inveniendi quo quaestio tractari, exponique possit...Est autem id quo quaestio tractatur, atque exponitur argumentum nominatum: quod arguat, id est, probet rem, ac demonstret: sic Virgiliius 4 *Aeneid*: Degeneres animos timor arguit.'

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, A8<sup>v-9<sup>r</sup>: 'Itaque cum animus disputando naturaliter incidat in earum rerum de quibus agitur causas, effecta, subjecta, adjuncta, dissentanea, caeteraque ab illis orta, pars haec artis iisdem vestigiis insistet, et quaestionis utramque partem maiorem et minorem sic intueri iubebit: ut causae, effecta, omniaque illa naturae concilia promantur.'</sup>

<sup>34</sup> *DID*, pp. 206-212, 358, N. Bruyère, *Méthode*, p. 48.

<sup>35</sup> Ramus 1547, A1<sup>v</sup>.

and using that to reconstruct in full the networks of syllogisms which underlie a passage, building up to an understanding of the whole, recall Agricola's instructions for reading at the end of book two, though his are more detailed.<sup>36</sup> The 1547 instructions for unpicking are still briefer but recognisably dependent on the same source, as presumably is the analysis of literary examples.<sup>37</sup> But after that the section on practice disappears from the manual. Ramus's summary of the doctrine of imitation, which appears in 1543 and 1547, corresponds to Agricola's discussion of practice in III, xv. In the fuller 1543 version, Agricola's method of running through the topics, and his teaching on their use in generating *copia* are mentioned.<sup>38</sup>

In 1547 and after (though in 1566 it drops into the commentary) a peroration on invention concludes the topics. This does not survey the whole process of invention as Agricola's final chapter of book two had, but we learn from it that the literary examples under each topic were supposed to teach the use of particular topics, while the peroration itself is intended to provide hints for the whole range of them. After 1555, this section is increasingly devoted to arguing that the topics account for the acquisition of new knowledge, suggesting that through the topics we know in a general way what it is we are looking for.<sup>39</sup> This does not seem to be dependent on Vives's observations on the workings of the mind, though it shares with it the idea of accounting for the power of the topics by a parallel with mind.<sup>40</sup> In 1543, Ramus uses a running example to illustrate the different sections and to show how they fit together.<sup>41</sup> Agricola had introduced this technique to dialectic books.

### *Method*

When method makes its first appearance, in 1547, it shows a general similarity to Agricola's precepts on the organisation of arguments.

The method of science therefore is the disposition of differing things in such a way that the whole subject may be more easily perceived and taught; it is deduced from the universal and general beginnings, to the subject and singular parts.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Ramus 1543, F4<sup>r</sup>, F8<sup>r</sup>-G2<sup>v</sup>, G6<sup>v</sup>-8<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>37</sup> Ramus 1547, I4<sup>v</sup>-6<sup>r</sup>, L2<sup>r</sup>-5<sup>v</sup>. Ramus considers examples from *Aeneid* 12 and from Ovid's praise of Penelope, *Heroides*, 1.

<sup>38</sup> Ramus 1543, G4<sup>v</sup>-G5<sup>r</sup>, 1547, L1<sup>r</sup>-2<sup>r</sup>, *DID*, pp. 451-454, 362-372, 402-403.

<sup>39</sup> Ramus 1547, E6<sup>v</sup>, 1555, pp. 99-100, 1560, G8<sup>v</sup>-H2<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>40</sup> See chapter 15 above.

<sup>41</sup> They centre on man and dialectician. Ramus 1543, B2<sup>r</sup>, B3<sup>r</sup>, B3<sup>v</sup>, B4<sup>v</sup>, B5<sup>v</sup> etc.

<sup>42</sup> Ramus 1547 H6<sup>r</sup>: 'Methodus igitur doctrinae est dispositio rerum variarum ab

Agricola never uses the word 'method', however, and Ramus probably took the word and much of his approach to the subject from his former teacher Johann Sturm. Sturm began his commentary (1539) on Cicero's *Partitiones oratoriae* by defining method as the 'certain, brief, correct and comprehensive way of teaching an art', and by distinguishing three types: from general to particular, from particular to general, and definition and division. Sturm regards Cicero's *Partitiones* as an example of the method of definition and division, which was praised by Plato, Galen and Hermogenes.<sup>43</sup> Ramus's method was rather similar and he, too, may have regarded *Partitiones oratoriae* as a model text. Sturm also employs the second method. In *De literarum ludis recte aperiendis* (1539) he describes the method of resolution as applied to the orators. Since this involves tracing the elements of orations back to the topics from which they originate, it may well derive from Agricola's teachings on dialectical reading. Sturm recommends it as an exercise from the fourth class upwards.<sup>44</sup> Ramus's laws of method show some resemblance to Agricola's instructions on disposition.<sup>45</sup>

Ramus's first discussion of method (1547) advises that one should make changes in the order of disposition to suit audience and occasion, supplying examples of the 'method of prudence' from Cicero and Plato.<sup>46</sup> This discussion is parallel (though only in a very general way) to Agricola's discussion of permissible variations in the order of the parts of a speech. In later versions, the three laws dominate a more concise and formal-sounding presentation.

Method is the disposition by which of many homogeneous propositions, known self-evidently or through the judgement of the syllogism, the first is put in the first place...and so on, so it always proceeds from universals to singulars.<sup>47</sup>

The second method survives only as an afterthought, as the concealed method conceded to poets and orators when they are trying to do something

---

universis et generalibus principiis ad subiectas et singulares partes deductarum, per quam tota res faciliter doceri, percipiique possit.'

<sup>43</sup> J. Sturm, *In Partitiones oratorias Ciceronis dialogi duo* (Strasbourg, 1539), A1<sup>V</sup>-3<sup>r</sup>: 'in artibus instituendis viam certam brevem rectam et quasi compendiariam.'

<sup>44</sup> J. Sturm, *De literarum ludis recte aperiendis* (Strasbourg, 1539), D2<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>45</sup> See n. 10 above, *DID*, pp. 418-420.

<sup>46</sup> Ramus 1547, I1<sup>r</sup>-2<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>47</sup> Ramus 1573, Z6<sup>r</sup>: 'Methodus est dispositio, qua de multis enuntiatis homogeneis, suoque vel syllogismi iudicio notis, disponitur primo loco absoluta notazione primum, secundo secundum, tertio tertium, et ita deinceps: ideoque ab universalibus ad singularia perpetuo progreditur.' Compare 1574, e4<sup>V</sup>-5<sup>r</sup>.

other than teach.<sup>48</sup> Sometimes the terms in which the use of the two methods is compared (the first to an audience which hears willingly, the second to an audience which resists) recall Agricola's explanation of the difference between exposition and argumentation.<sup>49</sup> If this is a source, it is a source only for the justification. The sort of adaptation of material envisaged is quite different.

### *The topics*

Because Ramus moves so rapidly from defining dialectic and invention to describing the first of the topics, the question of defining the topics does not arise. Invention finds the arguments, and the arguments (or perhaps one should say the types of argument) are cause, effect, subject etc.<sup>50</sup> The more usual formula is that the topics are the places where the arguments are to be found. Ramus's approach avoids recourse to metaphor and eliminates Boethius's distinction between the maxims and the topical differences. On the other hand it weakens Agricola's sense of the list as a way of thinking around a subject in order to find arguments, and perhaps makes the topics into a fixed list of arguments.

The list of topics does not change in the whole series of Ramus's dialectic textbooks, from September 1543 onwards. There are some changes in order and grouping up to 1547, but thereafter they too are consistent.<sup>51</sup> Within the list there are some important changes from previous practice.

Genus, species, whole and part are no longer separate topics but have become subdivisions of division. Ramus gives very strong emphasis to cause, effect, subject, adjuncts and comparison. These are topics in which Agricola's discussions are particularly thorough and original. The topic of subject and the coordination of subject and adjunct are innovations of his. Their persistence in Ramus's manuals is his most lasting use of Agricola in a point of detail. The large number of kinds of division he allows may also have influenced Ramus. But Ramus's list is very different from Agricola's.

---

<sup>48</sup> Ramus 1573, Ee6<sup>r</sup>-7<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>49</sup> Ramus 1547, H5<sup>r</sup>-11<sup>r</sup>, 1560, O2<sup>V</sup>, P4<sup>V</sup>, 1573, Ee1<sup>r</sup>, Ee6<sup>V</sup>.

<sup>50</sup> Ramus 1560, a6<sup>r</sup>: 'Inventio est pars dialecticae, quae argumentum et argumenti partes explicat. Argumentum est quod aliquid arguit.' The division follows immediately. Compare 1555, pp. 63-64, 1547, A2<sup>r</sup>, 1573, A8<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>51</sup> In 1555 the list runs: Final Cause, Formal Cause, Efficient Cause, Material Cause, Effect, Subject, Adjunct, Opposites (4 types), Repugnats, Comparisons (3 types), Similars, Dissimilars, Etymology, Conjugation, Division (4 types), Definition, Description, Inartificial arguments.

It is an unusual list, shorter than normal, and much shorter than Agricola's expanded list.

Ramus's topics entries change their manner between September 1543 and the later editions. In 1543 the topics, though brief, aim to explore the nature of the topic named. After 1547 the tendency is for sharp definitions, followed by a series of examples of the type of argument in use. Whatever distinctions have to be made within a topic are made after the definition. Each particular type is later illustrated with one or more examples. Later on the amount of comment on each example is reduced. The earlier versions of the topics are more like Agricola's than the later ones.<sup>52</sup>

Ramus's divisions within the topics do not have a single source, but combine elements from previous treatments and from other discussions of the subject concerned. I shall consider the examples of efficient causes and adjuncts.

Ramus divides efficient causes in three ways: sufficient/ assisting; creating/conserving; willed/accidental.<sup>53</sup> Cicero's divisions of efficient cause are: causes which produce an effect alone/causes which help others; causes which work without any eagerness of mind/causes which work through desire, mental agitation, nature, art or accident (all these latter types of cause are not inevitable); uniform/not uniform; (of the latter group) hidden/evident.<sup>54</sup> Agricola divides as follows: causes which necessarily act/causes which involve choice; those involving necessity may result from natural disposition or external force. Some are long lasting, some are intermittent; some causes are principal/some assisting; some command/some are instruments.<sup>55</sup> From these comparisons it would seem that Ramus's first distinction comes from Cicero, and that his third adapts Cicero. None of the three authors covers the topic in a way that is logically exhaustive, but Ramus seems to cover less ground than the others.

In 1543, the topic of adjuncts provides a list of various qualities of mind and body which may, but do not have to, inhere in a subject.<sup>56</sup> In 1547,

<sup>52</sup> This paragraph would require extensive quotation from all the topics to justify it. The discussion which follows offers some corroboration. Another example is *subjectum*: Ramus 1543, B3<sup>r-v</sup>, 1547, B1<sup>r</sup>, 1555, p. 73, 1560, C5<sup>v-6v</sup>, 1573, D4<sup>r-5v</sup>.

<sup>53</sup> Ramus 1547, A3<sup>v-6v</sup>. In 1555 and after the division runs (1) Procreating or conserving (2) Alone or with others (3) By itself (through choice or naturally) or by accident (by necessity or by fortune), 1555, pp. 66-70. In ordering the different types of cause, Ramus makes some remarks which recall Agricola on causes. Bruyère, 'Le statut de l'invention', p. 22, *DID*, pp. 84-85.

<sup>54</sup> *Topica*, 15.59-17.64.

<sup>55</sup> *DID*, pp. 78-81.

<sup>56</sup> Ramus 1543, B3<sup>r-v</sup>.

Ramus goes further and establishes degrees of closeness of inherence, envisaged as successive bandings. In this version he does not succeed in making the distinction between subject and adjunct very clear.<sup>57</sup> From 1555 the subject/adjunct distinction is clearer but the variety of the topic is suggested only through examples.<sup>58</sup> Ramus's account seems to begin as a reduction of Agricola's and to move further away from it.

It would appear then that although Ramus admired Agricola's topics, and although Agricola's priorities may have guided him in his choice of topics, both the list and the treatment are chiefly original, though working from the same classical sources.

#### *Connections between Rhetoric and Dialectic*

Ramus ensures that rhetoric and dialectic work together by clarifying the division between the two subjects. Dialectic teaches invention and disposition (or method), rhetoric, style and delivery. We have seen that Ramus follows Agricola in making this division, and in insisting that the two subjects must work together. In the development of Ramus's system dialectic usually led the way. By 1545 Ramus needed a rhetoric that would be the counterpart of stage two dialectic, but this task was not completed properly until 1549.<sup>59</sup> Within dialectic, Ramus's changes of mind about the concept of method from time to time necessitate changes in the textbook as a whole. Ramus's rhetoric lacks a similar motor of change. After 1549 it tends to adapt to changes in the dialectic or to new developments elsewhere (for example the move which the textbooks of both subjects make towards the vernacular and the French tradition in 1555), or to expand the commentary on the basis of Ramus's (and Talon's) further reading in the tradition, rather than to undergo fundamental change.

Once he had made invention and disposition part of dialectic, Ramus ought logically to have moved rhetoric into third place in the *trivium* (i.e. after dialectic), since style and delivery depend on the previous knowledge of invention and disposition which he has made part of dialectic. But in practice he always left rhetoric in second place, before dialectic. Perhaps he continued to believe that dialectic was the harder subject, and should therefore be studied later, in spite of its logical priority. Or perhaps his ideal (the arrangement by which they were taught side by side, dialectic in

---

<sup>57</sup> Ramus 1547, B1<sup>r</sup>-3<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>58</sup> Ramus 1555, pp. 74-76, 1560, C7<sup>r-v</sup>, 1573, D8<sup>r</sup>-E1<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>59</sup> See notes 5 and 7 above.

the morning, rhetoric in the afternoon - as described in his *Oratio de studiis philosophiae et eloquentiae coniungendis* (1546)) turned out to be unrealisable, as he recognised in his *Pro philosophica Parisiensis Academiae disciplina oratio*.<sup>60</sup>

Reading Agricola was undoubtedly fruitful for Ramus. Several of Ramus's central ideas and some of his detailed teaching comes from Agricola. But Ramus uses fewer details than we might expect, and, in contrast to most authors, hardly any from the topics. Like Melanchthon's, his use of Agricola diminishes with successive revisions.

Ramus's own textbooks are marked by their brevity, clarity and preoccupation with usefulness. These ideas come from Agricola and from the rhetorical tradition but Ramus takes them to such lengths that they are reductive of Agricola's insistence on flexibility and diversity. The syllogism is not the only worthwhile form of argumentation, the unique method is not the only pattern for arranging works, and the topics need more than a definition and a few examples. The system of the later dialectic is too simple, rigid and dogmatic. It is inflexible and unresponsive to the diversity of reality.

Where does the simplification of his later textbooks leave Ramus's commitment to the best authors? Within the body of the textbook (remembering that in its final version, and often posthumously, the text was printed without a commentary),<sup>61</sup> the examples appear less and less, and discussion of them is eliminated. Much of the material removed from the text reappeared in the *scholae*. Ramus and his followers continued to teach the authors and to produce commentaries on them.<sup>62</sup> However, most of what they wrote aimed to prove that the author used the techniques described by Ramus and employed the single method. It would be possible to argue either that, as the dialectic developed, the scientific model of the tree diagram (so frequent in Ramist analyses) took over from working with the authors, or that Ramus's literary readings, like his readings of philosophy, were one-sided and reductive. On the other side it would be possible to emphasize: the usefulness of being able to get through a complete dialectic course quickly; Ramus's insistence on dialectic's propaedeutic role in relation to reading and other subjects; and the value of the Ramist emphasis on the organisation of the whole book as against the

<sup>60</sup> P. Sharratt, 'Peter Ramus and the Reform', pp. 7-8.

<sup>61</sup> See notes 5 and 6 above. The printing of Ramus's text with other people's commentaries (as often in Frankfurt) is also relevant here.

<sup>62</sup> P Sharratt, 'Peter Ramus and the Reform', pp. 7-8, 16-19.

tendency of some renaissance readings to treat texts as collections of fragments. This issue can only be clarified by further study of Ramus's followers. Gabriel Harvey, for example, encouraged Ramism because of the help Ramus and Talon give in studying texts.<sup>63</sup>

Incidentally, though it might be assumed that Valla and Ramus are in some ways similar (e.g. anti-Aristotelianism, promotion of pre-Aristotelian logicians, opposition to metaphysics, enthusiasm for simplification), the details of their attacks are strikingly different. Ramus supports several Aristotelian doctrines which Valla rejects, for example the four types of opposition of words and the second and third figures of the syllogism.<sup>64</sup> One can only imagine what Valla would have had to say about Ramus's attacks on Quintilian! It may even be that Ramus did not have direct knowledge of Valla's work.

Ramus took much more trouble than Valla and Agricola to promote and defend his views, to acquire followers and to establish a school. His work continued to be printed long after Agricola's, and between 1570 and 1630 it was the most printed humanist dialectic. Ramus also revolutionised the study of dialectic. Although there was discussion of method before him, it was his attitude to the subject, and the reaction he provoked, which made method a major focus of attention in dialectic works of the later decades of the sixteenth century. His controversial writings also caused a polarisation of attitudes. Aristotelians insisted on introductory textbooks which were closer to Aristotle and to traditional interpretations. Some of Melanchthon's followers attempted to root out of their university teachings which they regarded as Ramist. It may be that some such retreat into established positions helps to explain the diminution in importance of Agricola, who belonged to no school, and the absence of new approaches to the arts of discourse in the later sixteenth century.

---

<sup>63</sup> H. S. Wilson, C. A. Forbes eds., *Gabriel Harvey's Ciceronianus* (Lincoln, Nebraska, 1945), pp. 70-95.

<sup>64</sup> Ramus 1543, B4<sup>r</sup>-5<sup>r</sup>, C6<sup>r</sup>-8<sup>v</sup>, 1555, pp. 126-134, 1573, pp. 313-319, 1574, d7<sup>r</sup>-e2<sup>r</sup> (first two figures only).

## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

### *DE INVENTIONE DIALECTICA IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY*

#### *Schools of dialectic and rhetoric in the sixteenth century*

Dialectic in the sixteenth century remained broadly Aristotelian. The major logical works of Aristotle continued to form the basis of university syllabuses and were frequently printed. There is evidence of greater interest in *Posterior Analytics* from the mid-century, perhaps coinciding with the interest in method shown by Melanchthon, Sturm, Ramus and others. Cicero's *Topica* was also printed frequently, perhaps as a replacement for Aristotle's *Topica* or perhaps in connection with the tendency to emphasize the connections between dialectic and rhetoric. Several commentaries on Aristotle were printed, including, in the early years of the century, the most important of the Greek commentaries. Following on from the example of George of Trebizond, whose *Isagoge dialectica* (composed in the 1430s) was very successful in the early sixteenth century, many introductory summaries of Aristotle's doctrines were produced. They aimed to give an overview of dialectic before the students embarked on the sequence of the *Organon*, which was still required by most universities. Within Aristotelian logic one can distinguish two large currents, one which extended late scholastic logic, and one which sought to avoid such medieval technical developments by concentrating attention on Aristotle's own teachings.<sup>1</sup>

Late scholastic logic flourished in some northern universities in the first decade of the century (one thinks of the circle of predominantly Spanish logicians around the Scotsman John Mair in Paris); thereafter it declined with a revival in the last third of the century, at least in places.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> These observations are based on the editions listed in Risse, *Bibliographia Logica*, I, 1472-1800 (Hildesheim, 1965) and on the statutes examined for chapters 13 and 14 above.

<sup>2</sup> E. J. Ashworth, 'Traditional Logic', in C. B. Schmitt et. al. ed., *Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 143-172. On Mair, E. J. Ashworth, *Language and Logic in the Post-Medieval Period* (Dordrecht, 1974), pp. 7-8, and other refs (indexed as Major), A. Broadie, *The Circle of John Mair* (Oxford, 1985) concentrates on Mair's Scottish pupils.

Scholasticism had a continuous development in Spain, and some Spanish manuals, particularly those associated with religious orders, made their way to the north.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps the spread of such manuals in the north after about 1560 represents a dialectical equivalent of the Counter Reformation.

Associated with late scholastic logic are two groups of introductory textbooks. The first group consists of traditional manuals produced at the beginning of the century, such as those of Lefèvre d'Étaples and Clichtove.<sup>4</sup> They alter the language of terminist manuals, such as Peter of Spain's *Tractatus*, which humanist writers had taken exception to, but otherwise retain the content of the scholastic logic textbook. They include extensive treatment of sophisms and the theory of supposition. These books were reprinted mainly in the first third of the century. The other group consists of later manuals which combine summaries of Aristotle's works with explanations of the key elements and the basic terminology of late scholastic logic. Thus Hunnaeus's *Dialectica* (1552) describes the subject-matter of the *Organon*, adding praise of Agricola and borrowing from Melanchthon, while his *Logices fundamentum* (1552) discusses supposition, ampliation, restriction, appellation and other scholastic logical techniques and terms.<sup>5</sup> Other works in this vein include Javellus's *Logicae compendium* (1551), Fonseca's *Institutionum dialecticarum libri octo* (1564), and Toletus's *Commentaria una cum quaestionibus in universam Aristotelis dialecticam* (1572).<sup>6</sup>

The movement back to unsupplemented Aristotle is exemplified by several manuals which summarise and simplify his precepts (and those of Boethius) while recognising humanist standards of Latin usage and omitting specifically medieval developments: George of Trebizond's *Isagoge*

<sup>3</sup> I am thinking of authors like Toletus and Fonseca, discussed below. W. Risse, *Die Logik der Neuzeit, I, 1500-1640* (Stuttgart, 1964), pp. 359-410, 415-419.

<sup>4</sup> For example the treatises collected in *In hoc opusculo contentae introductiones, in terminos, in artium divisionem, in suppositionem, in praedicabilia, in divisiones, in praedicamenta, in librum de enunciatione, in 1 priorum, in 2 priorum, in libros posteriorum, in locos dialecticos, in fallacias, in obligationes, in insolubilia* (Paris, 1520). The first two are by Clichtove, the rest by Lefèvre d'Étaples. The last ten sections of this work are sometimes known as *Artificiales introductiones*. C. Vasoli, *La dialettica e la retorica*, pp. 192-213.

<sup>5</sup> Both these works appeared in 1552. According to Risse they were printed a combined total of 24 times in the sixteenth century.

<sup>6</sup> Javellus's *Compendium* was printed 13 times up to 1629, Fonseca's work 36 times up to 1625, Toletus's *Commentaria* 27 times up to 1616, and his *Introductio in dialecticam Aristotelis* (1560), which I have not seen, 24 times up to 1621. All these figures are from Risse.

*dialectica*,<sup>7</sup> Caesarius's *Dialectica* (1520), Titelmans's *Dialecticae considerationis libri sex* (1533),<sup>8</sup> Périon's *Dialectica libri tres* (1543), Willichius's *Erotematum dialectices libri tres* (1540),<sup>9</sup> Seton's *Dialectica* (1545), and Sanderson's *Institutionum dialecticarum libri quatuor* (1583).<sup>10</sup> While all these books remain firmly Aristotelian, several of them are influenced by the humanist idea that dialectic is taught in order that it should be useful in everyday argument. Some of them refer to or use Agricola.<sup>11</sup>

Melanchthon's dialectic is always co-ordinated with rhetoric, but the content of his dialectic manuals can be considered broadly Aristotelian. His interest in new ways of teaching dialectic had its origin in his appointment as professor of Greek at Wittenberg, and his decision to give lectures on rhetoric. His dialectical works were much reprinted and his followers published many works on dialectic, notably: Ringelbergius's *Dialectica* (1529), Sarcerius's *Dialectica multis ac variis exemplis illustrata* (1536), Lossius's *Erotematum dialectices et rhetorices P. Melanchthonis* (1550), Valerius's *Tabulae totius logicae* (1551) and Wilson's *Rule of Reason* (1551).<sup>12</sup> In the final version of his dialectic Melanchthon includes a good deal of scholastic material as well as summarising Aristotle thoroughly. The combination of the increase in the size of his textbook with a marked reduction in the time allotted to dialectic in the Wittenberg syllabus suggests that at that stage he intended his summary to replace the study of Aristotle rather than introduce it.<sup>13</sup>

The only strongly anti-Aristotelian school of dialectic was that of Ramus, whose own extensive publications were supplemented by those of his many followers. As we have seen, Ramus's works enjoyed most success in France in the mid-century and in Protestant countries from after

<sup>7</sup> Printed at Venice in 1470, at Paris in 1508, at Strasbourg in 1513 and thereafter frequently in the Rhineland from 1515 and in Paris from 1528. J. Monfasani, *George of Trebizond* (Leiden, 1976), pp. 317, 328-337 links the printing of *Isagoge dialectica* with the popularity of *De inventione dialectica*. This seems reasonable, and the two works were taught together on occasion, but George's is a good brief summary in its own right and it appears in some statutes which do not mention Agricola.

<sup>8</sup> One can identify 36 editions of this work in the sixteenth century, see chapter 14, note 89 above.

<sup>9</sup> Périon's work appeared 7 times between 1543 and 1554, Willichius's 7 times between 1540 and 1571.

<sup>10</sup> Seton's work was printed in London, Sanderson's in Antwerp.

<sup>11</sup> Caesarius, Titelmans, Willichius, Seton and Sanderson. See chapter 14 above.

<sup>12</sup> Details on several of these works are given in chapter 14 above. Sarcerius's work appeared 12 times between 1536 and 1560, Lossius's 21 times between 1550 and 1600.

<sup>13</sup> See chapter 16 above.

his murder in 1572 until well into the seventeenth century. Some manuals attempted reconciliations between Ramus and Aristotle or Ramus and Melanchthon.<sup>14</sup> The two I have seen, by Goclenius and Libavius, are Ramist in organisation and content but include some additional material from Aristotle or Melanchthon respectively.<sup>15</sup>

Agricola did not establish a school of dialectic in the way that Melanchthon and Ramus did. His work was a stimulus to both of them but it was also blocked out of their syllabuses by their own works. Some of Melanchthon's followers used elements from Agricola, as did several of the humanist-influenced strict Aristotelians. We saw in chapter 14 that some teachers tried to incorporate *De inventione dialectica* into the Aristotelian syllabus, either as an introductory work or as a replacement for Aristotle's *Topica*. But this incorporation was not widespread or long lasting and it tended to fit Agricola's work into an Aristotelian context rather than allowing it to transform the reading of the Aristotelian texts. However, Agricola's emphasis on use, and on analysing writers' practice affected the way some followers of Aristotle and Melanchthon taught dialectic, and certainly inspired the Ramists. As logic teaching became more strongly divided into established named schools (even if there were attempts to make connections between schools, and to emphasize points of similarity), less heed was paid to works like Agricola's which did not fit easily within the syllabus of a particular school. The revival in the teaching of scholastic logic at the end of the century must also have tended to limit his influence.

Within rhetoric the most often printed ancient texts were the two classical Latin manuals covering the whole subject, *Rhetorica ad Herennium* and *Institutio oratoria*.<sup>16</sup> The most frequently printed of Cicero's works were *Topica*, his dialectic book, and *Partitiones oratoriae*, which also encourages a dialectical view of rhetoric by virtue of the early prominence it gives to the topics. Since it consists of a clear and unified if

<sup>14</sup> Risse, *Die Logik der Neuzeit*, I, pp. 177-206, 450-452.

<sup>15</sup> R. Goclenius, *Institutionum logicarum de inventione liber unus* (Marburg, 1598), pp. 145-155, 1-25, A. Libavius, *Dialectica Philippo-Ramaea* (Frankfurt, 1608), pp. 23, 105, 165; 25, 38, 40; 5-22, 613ff.

<sup>16</sup> J. J. Murphy, *Renaissance Rhetoric: A Short-Title Catalogue* (New York, 1981), hereafter Murphy, gives 38 northern sixteenth-century editions of *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, 67 of *Institutio oratoria*. As with Risse, one needs to be cautious with the figures, but it would be pointless to ignore them. No doubt both have mistakes, but they are invaluable guides. J. Monfasani, 'Humanism and Rhetoric', in A. Rabil jr. ed., *Renaissance Humanism: Foundations, Forms and Legacy*, 3 vols. (Philadelphia, 1988), III, pp. 171-235, gives an admirable outline of renaissance rhetoric. M. Fumaroli, *L'âge de l'éloquence* (Geneva, 1980) puts French rhetoric c. 1580-1680 in its historical perspective.

bare outline of the subject, it came to be regarded as a model textbook and was commented on by Latomus, Strebæus, Melanchthon and Sturm among others.<sup>17</sup>

From the 1540s on, particularly in Italy, there were more Latin editions of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* as well as editions in Greek.<sup>18</sup> Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, and Greek rhetoric generally is not very strongly represented in northern introductions to rhetoric. More studies are needed on the influence of Greek rhetoric on rhetorical thinking in the Renaissance.

Beside the ancient works may be set manuals which are mere compilations from Cicero. These works aim to provide a brief but full account, perhaps to compensate for the lack of a comprehensive textbook from Cicero's maturity (without considering Cicero's reasons for not writing such a book, set out in *De oratore*). Among these are Ringelbergius's very brief *Rhetorica* (before 1531), Gunther's *De arte rhetorica* (1568), which combines doctrines from *Ad Herennium* and *De inventione* with references to Quintilian, Erythraeus's *MIKPOTEXNH seu Medulla rhetoricae Tullianae* (1575) and Bersman's *Erotemata rhetorices* (1601), which follows *Rhetorica ad Herennium*.<sup>19</sup> These books tend to remain fairly close to their ancient sources in structure and contents, though modern works may be referred to and may affect some of the definitions.

There is also a group of new *summae* of rhetoric, which cover the whole subject according to original plans devised by their authors: Caesarius's *Rhetorica* (1534), Cavalcanti's *Retorica* (1559), and Soarez's *De arte rhetorica libri tres* (1562).<sup>20</sup> Hermogenes's rhetorical works were

<sup>17</sup> Murphy, pp. 82-85.

<sup>18</sup> Murphy records 34 northern editions in the sixteenth century.

<sup>19</sup> J. Ringelbergius, *Opera* (Lyons, 1531, repr. Nieuwkoop, 1967), pp. 245-290; P. Gunther, *De arte rhetorica* (Strasburg, 1568); V. Erythraeus, *MIKPOTEXNH seu Medulla rhetoricae Tullianae* (Nuremberg, 1575), G. Bersman, *Erotemata rhetorices* (Leipzig, 1601). The dates provided in the text are for the first publication listed by Murphy, or from dedicatory letters in copies I have seen.

<sup>20</sup> Most of Caesarius's material comes from *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, with occasional citation of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*. J. Caesarius, *Rhetorica in septem libros sive tractatus digesta* (Cologne, 1565), A4<sup>r</sup>, A7<sup>r</sup>, C2<sup>v</sup>, D1<sup>r</sup>. None of these references need imply direct knowledge. There are also references to Quintilian (e.g. A8<sup>r</sup>, B1<sup>r</sup>, B4<sup>r</sup>, C3<sup>r</sup>, 7<sup>v</sup>, E5<sup>v</sup>, F1<sup>v</sup> etc.), *De oratore* (E5<sup>r</sup>, E6<sup>v</sup>), Victorinus (G4<sup>r</sup>, G6<sup>v</sup>, H4<sup>r</sup>) and Martianus Capella (B7<sup>v</sup>, B8<sup>v</sup>, C8<sup>r</sup>, D4<sup>r</sup>, E1<sup>r</sup>, F5<sup>r</sup> etc.). Cavalcanti draws in some material from Hermogenes and quite a lot from Aristotle. Soarez mostly uses Cicero and Quintilian though he also cites from Cicero. Some elements suggest possible knowledge of Agricola: the topics come first; the chapter on the use of the topics; and the connections between topics and both amplification and emotional manipulation. C. Soarez S. J., *De arte rhetorica libri tres ex Aristotele, Cicerone et Quintiliano praecipue deprompti* (Seville, 1569), A2<sup>v</sup>-A3<sup>r</sup>, A5<sup>r</sup>-v.

printed a little in northern Europe, chiefly at the behest of Sturm, who also summarised them in his own works.<sup>21</sup> Hermogenes's theories also appeared in two surveys which were more important in Italy than in northern Europe, George of Trebizond's *Rheticorum libri V* and Cavalcanti's *Retorica*.

Alongside the new *summae* one might distinguish another group of rhetorics composed to fit beside dialectics. In this class would come the rhetorics of Ramus and Talon, and those of Ramus's followers. These authors limit rhetoric to style and delivery. Accordingly they reject the all-pervasive four-part oration, since disposition (for them part of dialectic) is subsumed in the strict rules of the single method, except that the method of prudence is permitted in special circumstances. Considerations of organisation and method also lead them to reduce the number of figures and arrange them in subgroups.<sup>22</sup> Both these changes have an effect on fundamental problems of the tradition of rhetoric. Melanchthon's rhetorics, which were often reprinted, are chiefly distinguishable for: their structure, their orientation to dialectic, four genres (including educational, subdivided into simple and complex themes) and the method of simple invention. Otherwise they use traditional material. In 1531 he added emotional manipulation and imitation to his textbook.<sup>23</sup> In rhetoric, Melanchthon did not have so many followers as he had in dialectic. Some of the latter wrote companion rhetorics which remain close to *Rheticum ad Herennium*.<sup>24</sup>

Finally there were several types of rhetoric which cover only a small part of the subject, for example letter-writing manuals, handbooks of tropes and figures, preaching manuals, composition exercises (such as Aphthonius's *Progymnasmata*), manuals on imitation and works on *copia* and prose rhythm.<sup>25</sup> Among this list the very widely taught kinds are: the

<sup>21</sup> Murphy, pp. 173-174, 277-279. D. Shuger, *Sacred Rhetoric* (Princeton, 1988), pp. 154-192 looks at the influence of Hellenistic rhetoric on the Christian grand style in the Renaissance. See also J. Monfasani, 'The Byzantine Rhetorical Tradition and the Renaissance', in J. J. Murphy ed., *Renaissance Eloquence* (Berkeley, 1983), pp. 174-187 and A. Patterson, *Hermogenes and the Renaissance* (Princeton, 1970).

<sup>22</sup> See the discussion of Ramist rhetoric in chapter 17 above.

<sup>23</sup> See chapter 16 above.

<sup>24</sup> Ringelbergius, n. 19 above, T. Wilson, *The Art of Rhetorique* (1560), ed. G. H. Mair (Oxford, 1909), C. Valerius, *In universam bene dicendi rationem tabula, summam artis rhetoricae complectens* (Antwerp, 1568). Murphy also lists rhetorics by Sarcerius, Strigelius and Bader.

<sup>25</sup> These manuals are too numerous to list but there are discussions of them in T. W. Baldwin, *Shakespere's Small Latine and Lesse Greeke*, 2 vols (Urbana, 1944), D. L. Clark, 'The Rise and Fall of Progymnasmata in Sixteenth Century Grammar Schools', *Speech Monographs*, 19 (1952), pp. 259-263, L. A. Sonnino, *A Handbook to Sixteenth Century*

letter-writing manual and the *progymnasmata*, both of which would introduce the student to a range of possible forms outside the four-part oration and, in the case of the latter, also to some building blocks and ways of writing which would be helpful in later compositions; and *De copia*, which would have introduced important ideas about style and the variety of possible forms of expression.

These works, together with the handbooks on tropes and figures, would in most cases have been studied thoroughly at the pre-university level, in town grammar schools, and in the *bursae* attached to the arts faculty at some continental universities. As a consequence of this, certain fragments of rhetoric and certain procedures must have been very widely known and used in the sixteenth century. But it does not follow that the whole system, or the ideas underpinning the procedures were equally widely available. There is also some evidence from statutes (and from the practice of the same individual teaching and writing manuals on both rhetoric and dialectic) that ancient and modern manuals of the whole of rhetoric were becoming more widely taught and were occupying more time within the university syllabus proper by the mid sixteenth century.<sup>26</sup>

As I have indicated, Agricola had little influence on rhetoric textbooks in spite of the fact that *De inventione dialectica* was often taught in connection with rhetoric. The tendency for an author to write a rhetoric as a companion work to his own or a friend's dialectic obviously agrees with Agricola as does the Ramist restriction of rhetoric to questions of style. In spite of his discussion of *copia* and his translation of Aphthonius, I think that Agricola's inclination to bring the arts of language together into a unity is opposed to the development of partial rhetorics. Even so he might have approved of the teaching of a particular collection of specialised rhetorics if they followed on from a proper study of dialectic. Apart from the works of Latomus and Bucoldianus already mentioned (and perhaps Soarez) the new *summae* of rhetoric do not make use of Agricola. However, the preponderance of *Topica* and *Partitiones oratoriae* within the sixteenth-century printing of Cicero's works can be seen as consonant with Agricola.

---

*Rhetoric* (London, 1968), M. Fumaroli, *L'Age de l'éloquence*, K. Meerhoff, *Rhétorique et poétique au XVIe siècle en France*, D. Shuger, *Sacred Rhetoric*. Murphy's short title catalogue is helpful in locating examples.

<sup>26</sup> See chapters 13 (university statutes) and 17 (Ramus) above. This is also the case in Wittenberg, W. Friedensburg, *Urkundenbuch der Universität Wittenberg*, part 1, (1502-1611) (Magdeburg, 1926).

*The impact of Agricola's general ideas*

In the period up to 1580, and in several manuals which were printed well after that, one can detect preoccupations which reflect many of Agricola's general ideas. For convenience, the ideas on which many authors agreed may be listed here.

1. Invention is a crucial part of dialectic.
2. Dialectic is concerned with the use of real language in reasoning.
3. Dialectic and rhetoric are closely connected. Rhetoric makes use of many of the operations of dialectic. For most purposes dialectic precedes rhetoric. If dialectic governs the ordinary use of reason in language, rhetoric adds to it for special purposes and on special occasions.
4. It is appropriate to use quotations from literary texts as illustrations of the precepts of dialectic and rhetoric.
5. Dialectic and rhetoric are helpful in understanding and analysing the language works a person reads, and are of assistance in written composition, even when the work being composed is not an oration.
6. Large scale arrangement (disposition) is a neglected but important subject, in which the fixed forms of rhetoric need to be supplemented by dialectical ideas about order, and by reflection on the circumstances, intention and audience of the composition.
7. Rhetoric and dialectic ought to teach step by step procedures to assist in the various aspects of arguing and writing.
8. Questions are the subject-matter of dialectic.
9. The topics from which arguments are discovered are also useful in amplification, for producing *copia* of discourse, and in emotional manipulation.
10. The topics are reminders of where to look for arguments. Their force comes from the fact that they describe common types of connection which exist between things in the world.

The final three ideas (and the last in particular) are accepted by fewer authors than the others. This list suggests that the general ideas which inform Agricola's work (they can hardly be called his discoveries) are more widely agreed on in the sixteenth century than the points of detail, which I surveyed in chapter fourteen. This is unsurprising, but it is disappointing because the detailed working out of his principles, in the individual topics or in the instructions for dialectical reading, is impressive and original. Agricola's idea that thinking about composition should be the responsibility of the new subject of dialectical invention could not easily be

realised in the educational system because of the institutional division between rhetoric and dialectic. But the related ideas about the connection between the two subjects, the need for dialectic to work with real language, and the usefulness of literary examples were successful. His teaching on the use of the topics and on the method of analysing literary texts to reveal their argumentative and persuasive structures offers us a new perspective on sixteenth-century practices of reading and writing.

*De inventione dialectica* was so original, so often printed and taught, and so influential on later writers that its historical importance is not in doubt. Students of the Renaissance need a critical edition and, when that is done, an English translation.<sup>27</sup>

#### *Argument and Renaissance Studies*

The conclusions of this study also affect some current debates in renaissance studies. Firstly, I have argued that Valla's contribution to renaissance dialectic was much less important than has sometimes been assumed, both because Agricola disagreed with him on many points and because his *Dialectic* had relatively little influence on later authors. For the arts of language in northern Europe in the sixteenth century, Valla's great contribution was his *Elegantiae*, a guide to usage and a model of grammatical learning. Thanks to Erasmus's publication of the text and assimilation of its principles, Valla's *Annotationes in Novum Testamentum* was also of primary importance. But the main impetus for an account of argument based on real language came from Agricola (and from George of Trebizond).

Secondly, the comparison of printed materials suggests that there was a considerable division within the arts of language in the sixteenth century between northern and southern Europe. Where northern Europe produced many new introductions to rhetoric and dialectic, many of the latter differing in important ways from Aristotle, southern Europe tended to concentrate on summaries of classical rhetoric and commentaries on the *Organon*, some of them in the scholastic mode, some employing the new Greek learning, some drawing directly on the Greek rhetorical tradition. This division between north and south is more striking than any division between Catholic and Protestant schools in northern Europe.

---

<sup>27</sup> Dr. Lothar Mundt of Berlin is preparing a critical edition. Selected chapters are translated in J. R. McNally, 'Rudolph Agricola's *De inventione dialectica libri tres*: a Translation of Selected Chapters', *Speech Monographs*, 34 (1967), 393-422.

Thirdly, we have seen the difficulties which medieval institutional structures pose for the absorption of humanist ideas within teaching. Rhetoric can obtain more attention within the *trivium*. Dialectic can be taught less and in a more language oriented way. But it is much harder for dialectical invention to find an appropriate niche in the syllabus, or for a simplified dialectic to be taught before rhetoric. Even within humanist dialectic, we have seen the complexity of the process by which one person's ideas are filtered and adapted by subsequent writers. Both this process of filtering and the sequence of syllabus reform show the great resilience of the Aristotelian tradition in dialectic, even in northern Europe.

How do developments in the renaissance arts of language correspond to received ideas about the nature and progress of the Renaissance?

First of all it is clear that, however limited in time and internally divided it was, renaissance argument was very different from late scholastic logic. For dialectic and rhetoric it makes sense to speak of the Renaissance of the fifteenth century as marking a clear break in the progressive evolution of the two subjects over the medieval period.

It must also be acknowledged that the new textual discoveries and the progress of Greek studies played a role in the changes which came about. The discovery of the complete Quintilian was an important stimulus to Valla, and Quintilian is probably also Agricola's most important point of reference. Valla and Agricola both used their knowledge of Greek, but the key passages in their works are derived from Latin authors or from the Aristotelian tradition as it was already understood in the Middle Ages. Greek texts for rhetoric and dialectic had more impact in the sixteenth century, particularly in Italy (though one must not forget Sturm's use of Hermogenes). Agricola and the sixteenth-century authors make use of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and Cicero's *De oratore* and *Orator*, but again these works were not responsible for the really significant changes.

The crucial new feature, as I take it, was a different attitude to the teaching of argument and composition. Valla and other Italian humanists believed that the *trivium* ought to teach people how to argue in neoclassical Latin. They rejected the technicality and formalism of medieval logic. This represented a break with current attitudes but also a revival of a pedagogic attitude to the *trivium* which had certainly been present earlier in the Middle Ages and which may never have been entirely obscured. Agricola shared this attitude. He tried to combine the doctrines of rhetoric and dialectic within a single subject which would teach the effective use of language. He concentrated his attention on invention, argument and

planning. Equally formative for Agricola was a detailed and thoughtful reading of classical texts (particularly Quintilian, Cicero's *Orations* and the *Aeneid*). He applied the principles of rhetoric and dialectic to the texts (and to objects and events in the world), and allowed the experience of reading the texts to question and refine the principles. In this way Agricola belongs more to the literary and pedagogic tradition (that is to say the tradition which regarded the classical texts as practical models of how to write) associated with earlier Italian humanists like Loschi and Guarino than to the later tradition of philological acuity represented by Poliziano and those professors who preferred to demonstrate their learning by lecturing on 'difficult' texts.

The geographical question is also relevant. Much of Agricola's learning and prestige derived from his having spent so many years in Italy but he was also highly original. No Italian produced anything like *De inventione dialectica*. Agricola's ideas took root (to the extent that they did) only in the North. Italian rhetoric and dialectic in the sixteenth century are far more directly based on the classical texts (with some admixture of Greek learning). Eminent northern humanists (either imitating Agricola or, more probably, in response to the educational situation) gave much more time than their southern counterparts to the composition of new textbooks for pedagogic use. And it was in the North that such textbooks tended to be printed and taught.

For this reason I believe renaissance argument to furnish yet another example of the originality and difference of the northern Renaissance, to set against the older picture of the Renaissance gradually spreading in all directions from its epicentre in early *Quattrocento* Florence.

#### *Reading and Writing in the Renaissance*

Since textbooks of rhetoric and dialectic aim to improve the writing and argument of those who study them, the true measure of renaissance argument (and of Agricola's contribution) must be sought not in the proliferation of textbooks but in the practice of the arts of language. Some evidence exists of what teachers told pupils to do, but the surviving notebook evidence is rather slender. Since it has not been collected systematically and since some of those who have left most records are likely to have been untypical, interpretation of the evidence must remain tentative.

Barthélémy Aneau (1505-1561), author of *Alector*, translator of *Utopia* and lecturer in rhetoric at Lyons, consciously follows Melanchthon's

method of textual analysis in the commentary to his verse translation (1550) of Eucherius's *Epistola paraenetica*. He picks out the line of argument, starting from a commonplace, topics from which the material is drawn, forms of argumentation, and appeals to the emotions of the audience, as well as stylistic features.<sup>28</sup>

A later English example is John Rogers (Exeter College, Oxford, 1579-1582), who made notes on a number of Oxford University sermons in his commonplace book. Here is the beginning of his record of a homily preached by Toby Mathew, at the time Vice-Chancellor of the University.

Notes of a sermon preached before the judges by doctor Mathew in oxon the 29th of June 1581.

Text Proverbs cap 24 vers 21 22 23 24

My sonne feare the lord and the kinge and Medle not with them that are seditious

to the 25th verse heare are 2° partes to be observed:

1) a generall charge to al the good sonnes of Salomon, in these wordes: my sonne feare the lord and the king

2) a particular instruction to the wyse: in these wordes: it is not good to have respecte of any person in judgement. etc

a charge is:

1) an appellatione: my sonne

2) a commandemente: feare the lord and the kinge

3) a prohibition and medle not with those that are seditious

4) a reason for their destruction shall ryse sudeny and who knoweth the ruine of them bothe

This word sonne is added for love sake which parentes beare to ther children as Abraham to Isaac, Jacob to Joseph, David to Absolom the woman of Canaan to her daughter etc.

a father is taken many wayes:

of our company as our master

of our concyencies as the ministeres

of our bodyes as our parentes

of body and soule as god almyghty

hic pater. et cura pater alias est genitura: hic pater aetate pater ille vocatur honore. Also Father is taken for a:

1) chiefe governor or prince 1 Chron 2 24 (?)

2) for preachers and prophets as in 2 King 2 12-14; 1 Cor 4 14-15

3) for aged men levit 19.32 1 Tim 1-3etc

4) for Magistrates Exod 22.28 Deut 16 18 Rom 13.4

5) Cases are of Pharisees Sorceres ( )<sup>29</sup>

Rogers's notes pick out the logical structure behind Mathew's polished sermon. Mathew conducts his exegesis by dividing the biblical text into its

<sup>28</sup> K. Meerhoff, 'Rhétorique néolatine et culture vernaculaire: Les analyses textuelles de Barthélémy Aneau', *Études littéraires*, 24: 3 (1991), pp. 63-85.

<sup>29</sup> Bodleian Library, Ms. Rawlinson D. 273, p. 178.

components, and examining different senses of its key words. He assumes that close logical analysis is the appropriate way to explain a text. Rogers's note-taking and Mathew's preaching reflect a similar approach: the meaning and structure of a text are to be revealed and recorded by logical and verbal analysis.

The notebook of Henry Addyter, who studied at Christ's College Cambridge 1588-1593, contains analyses of various books of the Bible. Here is Addyter's analysis of Psalm 19:

The exposition of the xixth psalme

In this psalme partly	he teacheth	By the creatures unto the 7v	the Church and Ethnicks
		1. Adjoyns 8	Perfect, sure v7 Pure, right v8 Cleare, perpetual Trew, righteous v9
By the law which he commendeth by		2. Effects 4	Converteth the soule Giveth wisdom to the simple 7 Rejoyceth the hart Lighteneth the eyes 8
	3. Comparisons 2		for pleasure, sweeter than honey or the honeycombe for profit, finess compared to Gold 10
	4. Experiens		for that he knew the law to make him circumspecte v11 of keeping it which is a greate reward
he prayeth	to take away his Synnes and these are eyther		secret presumptuous
	to accept him, both in his		words thoughts

In teaching he eyther		compareth the teachers or expoundeth the properties, effects end of the teacher
	Subject	the first is common as well to them which are not of the church as to those which are of the Church the second is proper to the church of Christ
The comparison is eyther in the	Effects	the first teacheth that ther is a God the second that we have a good and merciful God
	End	the one maketh us inexcusable the other (in Chryste) maketh us inexcusable to salvation. <sup>30</sup>

Addyter's analysis observes different types of structure working together. He first breaks the psalm into teaching (verses 1-11) and asking (12-14), then subdivides teaching which arises from the creation (1-6) from the teaching of the law, or word of God (7-11). Within this latter category he analyses the topics the psalmist employs in his description of the law. So, for example, the complements in verses 7, 8 and 9 are drawn from the topic of adjuncts, while the adverbial phrases of verses 7 and 8 are effects. After these divisions Addyter draws the two parts of the psalm's teaching together, noting the implicit comparison between creation and revelation, under the topics of subject, effects and purpose. Addyter uses dialectical terminology to make a range of connections and distinctions within the text of his psalm.

It is much harder to find renaissance writers' plans and drafts, but the following passage from Robert Greene's *Pandosto* gives an outline of Pandosto's thoughts. This stands as an outline for the verbatim soliloquy which was usual at such a moment in an Elizabethan romance.

First, he called to mind the beauty of his wife Bellaria, the comeliness and bravery of his friend Egistus, thinking that love was above all laws and,

---

<sup>30</sup> British Library, Harleian Ms. 3230, fol. 4v.

therefore, to be stayed with no law; that it was hard to put fire and flax together without burning; that their open pleasures might breed his secret displeasures. He considered with himself that Egistus was a man and must needs love, that his wife was a woman, and therefore, subject unto love, and that where fancy forced, friendship was of no force.<sup>31</sup>

This passage contains the elements from which a longer speech could be elaborated: factual observations which could be gathered into a chain of reasoning, axioms, proverbs, even hints for passages of alliteration. Greene offers the audience notes for the composition of the speech, like the notes which they might have made on it, in place of the full text. By showing how Pandosto collects facts and axioms to reach a false conclusion, Greene also hints at the unreliability of argument.

He also provides an outline for the speech in which Franion attempts to dissuade Pandosto from the murder of Egistus.

His cupbearer, either being of a good conscience or willing for fashion sake to deny such a bloody request, began with great reasons to persuade Pandosto from his determinate mischief, shewing him what an offence murder was to the Gods: how such unnatural actions did more displease the heavens than men, and that causeless cruelty did seldom or never escape without revenge: he laid before his face that Egistus was his friend, a king, and one that was come into his kingdom to confirm a league of perpetual amity betwixt them; that he had and did shew him a most friendly countenance; how Egistus was not only honoured of his own people by obedience, but also loved of the Bohemians for his courtesy, and that if he should without any just or manifest cause poison him, it would not only be a great dishonour to his majesty, and a means to sow perpetual enmity between the Sicilians and the Bohemians, but also his own subjects would repine at such treacherous cruelty.<sup>32</sup>

Greene groups the arguments according to the principles of dialectic. He places general arguments against murder first, then arguments against the murder of Egistus (personal relations, protected position, purpose of his visit). Next he puts the argument that the murder would be especially treacherous because of Pandosto's friendly behaviour towards Egistus, then the likely effects of the poisoning, under the headings of personal affection for Egistus, injustice, dishonour, and the reaction of the people of both countries. The audience should register the thoroughness of Franion's dialectical invention, but the main narrative point of the passage is his argument's lack of effect. Pandosto is not persuaded, partly because his rage has overcome his reason, and partly because the main point at issue

---

<sup>31</sup> J. H. P. Pafford ed., *The Winter's Tale* (London, 1963), p. 186.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 187.

for him, the supposed adultery of Egistus and Bellaria, has not been addressed.

In all these passages we can see how an argumentative plan underpins what is understood to be communicated. The logical structure is adumbrated with ideas and verbal forms derived from rhetoric, but the argument takes priority. We can see how Greene exploits the audience's familiarity with dialectical outlines for texts in order to vary the stylistic texture of his romance. The teachings of rhetoric and dialectic do not have to be used as recipes for writing. A writer can also turn them to advantage in more oblique ways.

There is very widespread evidence in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries for the use of commonplace books - as recommended by Agricola and Erasmus - and one may speculate as to the habits of mind they induced.<sup>33</sup> The primary purpose of the commonplace book was to enable the student to reuse in original compositions materials from his or her reading. The student would enter a series of headings, such as justice, virtue, courage, at the top of the pages of an exercise book. When she comes across a memorable passage in a book, she enters it under the appropriate heading. In due course the book becomes a personal, subject-organised dictionary of quotations. The book itself may have been superseded by the extensive printed collections of quotations, comparisons and examples.<sup>34</sup> But the effect of the training may have influenced habits of reading, because the compiler of a commonplace book must always be asking: under what heading might I enter this phrase? what subject is this sentence logically related to? It is possible that this habit of mental filing actually enabled a renaissance reader to attend to a romance or a play on two levels simultaneously: following the story and noting the development of a debate between the observations of the various characters on fortune, valour, wealth and so on. If this were so, it would explain why, for

<sup>33</sup> J. M. Lechner, *Renaissance Concepts of the Commonplaces* (New York, 1962), R. R. Bolgar, *The Classical Heritage* (Cambridge, 1954), pp. 270-275, 432-433, R. H. and M. A. Rouse, *Preachers, Florilegia and Sermons: Studies on the Manipulus Florum of Thomas of Ireland* (Toronto, 1979). An easily accessible example is Milton's in T. O. Mabbott and J. M. French ed., *The Uncollected Writings of John Milton* (New York, 1938), *The Works of John Milton*, XVIII, p. 133. Hugh Kearney, *Scholars and Gentlemen* (London, 1970) gives a useful list of renaissance English miscellaneous manuscripts including many commonplace books. Ann Moss of Durham University is currently working on a much needed study of renaissance commonplace books.

<sup>34</sup> Such as Erasmus's *Adagia*, *Parabolae* and the works mentioned in W. Ong, 'Commonplace rhapsody: Ravisius Textor, Zwinger and Shakespeare', in R. R. Bolgar ed., *Classical Influences on European Culture, AD 1500-1700* (Cambridge, 1976), pp. 91-126.

example, Elizabethan prose romances and plays are so rich in such thematic material.

I have argued elsewhere that rhetoric and dialectic are intimately involved in the birth of the essay: both in Montaigne's version in which the argument slips from subject to subject through the topics, and in Bacon's in which each section is topically related to the subject given by the title. I have also tried to show how the letters of some Elizabethan diplomats exploit ideas about narrative and argument which they learned from their textbooks.<sup>35</sup>

It is much easier to indicate some of the ways in which logical ideas permeated sixteenth-century reading and writing than to 'prove' the influence of a particular writer (and it may be that some of the connections are in the eye of the beholder). What we need now are some broad comparative studies looking at the logic and rhetoric of a (geographical and chronological) range of texts within particular genres. My guess is that such studies would show that renaissance and medieval writers differed in the way they used arguments, but that some of those differences would depend on exploiting the manuals rather than obeying them.

#### *Renaissance Argument and Modern Education*

But I want to conclude by suggesting some particular aspects of the rhetorical and dialectical traditions studied in this book, which may have interest for our present day teaching of the use of language. This exercise is given added point because at present a revival of ancient rhetoric is being promoted (at least in Britain) by several related developments. One stimulus is coming from education and teacher training. Teachers of the mother tongue are now being asked to teach argumentative writing, where in the recent past precedence was given to forms which were considered more creative. This is accompanied in some quarters by an appreciation that narrative itself involves rules and procedures which have to be learned. Lecturers in education are now considering how narrative and argument are to be taught, and they are looking to classical rhetoric for suggestions.<sup>36</sup>

---

<sup>35</sup> 'Rhetoric and the Essay', forthcoming in *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, and *Permeations of Renaissance Dialectic into English Discourse c.1580-c.1620* (Warburg Institute, MPhil. Thesis, 1978), pp. 95-119.

<sup>36</sup> John Dixon and Leslie Stratta, 'Argument: What does it mean to the Teacher of English', *English in Education*, 16 (1982), pp. 41-54, *idem.*, 'Argument and the Teaching of English: A Critical Analysis', in A. M. Wilkinson ed., *The Writing of Writing* (Milton Keynes, 1986), pp. 8-21, A. M. Wilkinson, 'Argument as a Primary Act of Mind', *Educational Review*, 38 (1986), pp. 127-138, R. Andrews ed., *Narrative and Argument*

Within linguistics, the subject of pragmatics aims to analyse texts longer than the single sentence in relation to the context and purpose of communication. Students of this subject are also investigating connections between their intuited rules for effective communication and the precepts of rhetoric.<sup>37</sup> Students of film and media who are examining ways in which texts produce meaning are becoming interested in rhetoric as an approach to the analysis of texts and documents.<sup>38</sup> The study of communication, which combines aspects of linguistics, psychology, sociology and literary criticism has become popular and is beginning to develop a theoretical basis for itself.<sup>39</sup> All these developments make it seem worthwhile to list some ideas from Agricola, Valla and Renaissance rhetoric and dialectic generally which might be of interest to contemporary students and teachers of the use of language.

1. Rhetoric and dialectic are both concerned with analysing texts and with producing original compositions in different forms. They need to be studied together.

2. The topics extend people's ability to ask questions of a word or a thing, and to be aware of the kind of questions they are asking. Agricola's version of the topics is especially useful because it is aware of the different kinds of relationship described by each topic.

3. It is helpful to understand the argumentative structure and the logical implications of a text. Dialectical training will also discuss the strengths and

---

(Milton Keynes, 1989), also a special number of *English in Education*, 24, 1 (1990). A revival of interest in disposition is heralded in 'genre theory' associated with Gunther Kress.

<sup>37</sup> Pragmatics began with a paper on conversational implicature by Paul Grice, 'Logic and conversation', in P. Cole and J. L. Morgan eds., *Syntax and Semantics III: Speech Acts* (New York, 1975). Recent surveys are: G. Brown and G. Yule, *Discourse Analysis* (Cambridge, 1983), G. Leech, *Principles of Pragmatics* (London, 1983). The field has been revitalized by D. Sperber and D. Wilson, *Relevance: Communication and Cognition* (Oxford, 1986). Also from the point of view of linguistics is W. Nash, *Rhetoric* (Oxford, 1990). Further points of contact between rhetoric and linguistics are discussed in a paper by Dick Leith delivered at the Rhetoric and Discourse Conference (Leeds, 1990) and to be published in *Rhetorica*.

<sup>38</sup> A classic example would be R. Barthes, 'L'ancienne Rhétorique: Aide-mémoire', *Communications*, 16 (1970), pp. 172-229, translated in *The Semiotic Challenge* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 13-93. This goes with better known writings like 'Rhetoric of the Image', in S. Heath ed., *Image-Music-Text* (Glasgow, 1977), pp. 32-51, *Mythologies* (New York, 1972) and *S/Z* (New York, 1974). Also D. Leith and G. Myerson, *The Power of Address* (London, 1989).

<sup>39</sup> Such courses are now taught in many British universities. See J. Corner and J. Hawthorn, *Communication Studies: An Introductory Reader* (London, 1975), *Communication Studies Newsletter*, edited from Sheffield Hallam University. There is a centre for Communication Studies at Liverpool University. I am grateful to Jill Grinstead for information about Communication Studies syllabuses.

weaknesses of different types of argument.

4. When preparing to write it is important to consider the attitude of the audience, the presentation of the writer, the occasion, and the nature of the arguments available in order to determine both the main point to be argued and the form and structure of the composition.

5. Step by step procedures are useful in dividing up the tasks involved in writing but as much information as possible must be gathered at the points where decisions about form, content and approach have to be made. The principles which underly the division into tasks must be made explicit, so that the writer understands what the governing ideas are and how changes in circumstances might alter their importance. Step by step procedures need to be supplemented by practice and by the analysis of existing examples.

6. It is helpful to know the variety of styles and registers available and to understand the factors which govern their appropriateness to and their effects in particular situations.

7. The effects and the uses of certain patterns of words or features of language (such as metaphor, comparison, epigram, rhetorical question) need to be isolated for special study.

8. Sensitivity to the inference value, the associations and the emotional effects of individual words are of great value to writers. They think about the logical and emotional implications of the choice of a particular word, or of the passage from one word to another in the course of a piece of writing.

## SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

This bibliography lists all primary texts used (except for classical texts where I have used standard editions) and all studies which made a significant contribution to the book or which are cited more than once. I have not listed the titles of individual essays in collections which I have used frequently such as *Lorenzo Valla e l'umanesimo italiano*, *Rodolphus Agricola Phrisius* or *The Cambridge History of Late Medieval Philosophy*. Modern anthologies of texts, such as Garin's *Prosatori latini del quattrocento* are listed in the studies section under their editor.

### PRIMARY TEXTS

R. Agricola, *De inventione dialectica* (Louvain, 1515)  
—, *De inventione dialectica*, with Alardus's commentary (Cologne, 1539), reprinted Nieuwkoop, 1967, Frankfurt, 1967, abbrev. *DID*  
—, *De inventione dialectica*, with Phrissemius's commentary (Cologne, 1528, repr. Hildesheim, 1976), abbrev. *Phrissemius* (1528)  
—, *De inventione dialectica libri omnes integri et recogniti iuxta autographi, nuper D. Alardi Aemstelredami opera in lucem educti fidem, atque doctissimis scholiis illustrati Ioannis Phrissemii Alardi Aemstelredami Reinardi Hadamarii* (Cologne, 1552)  
—, *Della inventione dialetica*, trans. O. Toscanella (Venice, 1567)  
—, *Lucubrations* (Cologne, 1539, repr. Nieuwkoop, 1967), abbrev. *Lucubrations* (1539)  
Alardus, *Epitome primi libri de Inventione dialectica Rudolphi Agricolae* (Paris, 1539)  
L. B. Alberti, *De pictura*, ed. C. Grayson (Bari 1980) repr. from *Opere volgari*, III (Bari 1973)  
Albertus Magnus, *Liber de praedicabilibus, Opera Omnia*, ed. A. Borgalt, I (Paris, 1890)  
J. Apel, *Methodica Dialectices ratio ad iurisprudentiam adcommodata* (Nuremberg, 1535)  
Aphthonius, *Progymnasmata*, in H. Rabe ed., *Rhetores Graeci*, X (Leipzig, 1926), pp. 1-51.  
T. Aquinas, *De ente et essentia*, ed. M-D. Roland Gosselin (Kain, 1926)  
—, *On Being and Essence*, trans. with notes by A. Maurer (Toronto, 1968)  
—, *Quaestiones de Veritate* (Rome, 1970)  
Aristotle, *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, ed. J. Barnes, 2 vols (Princeton, 1984)  
—, *Categoriae vel Praedicamenta*, ed. L. Minio-Paluello, *Aristoteles Latinus*, I, 1-5 (Bruges, 1968)  
—, *Categories and De interpretatione*, trans. with notes by J. L. Ackrill (Oxford, 1963)  
—, *De interpretatione*, ed. L. Minio-Paluello, *Aristoteles Latinus*, II, 1-2 (Bruges, 1965)  
—, *Posterior Analytics*, trans. with notes by J. Barnes (Oxford, 1975)  
Augustine, *De civitate dei*, with Vives's commentary (Basel, 1522)  
G. Bersman, *Erotemata dialectices* (n.p., 1602)  
—, *Erotemata rhetorices* (Leipzig, 1601)  
Boethius, *De differentiis topicis, Patrologia Latina*, ed. J. P. Migne, vol. 64  
—, *In Topica Ciceronis, PL* 64  
G. Bucoldianus, *De inventione et amplificatione oratoria* (Lyons, 1534)

F. Budé, *Annotationes in Pandectas, Opera omnia*, 4 vols (Basel, 1537), III.

R. Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, 3 vols (London, 1932)

C. Butler, *Oratoria Libri Duo* (Oxford, 1633)

—, *Rhetoricae Libri Duo* (London, 1629)

J. Caesarius, *Dialectica* (Cologne, ?1525), (British Library copy 520db(2))

—, *Dialectica* (Cologne, 1558)

—, *Rhetorica in septem libros sive tractatus digesta* (Cologne, 1565)

J. Camerarius, *Elementa rhetoricae* (Basel, 1551)

C. Cantiuncula, *Topica* (Basel, 1520)

L. Carbone, *Introductionis in Logicam Libri VI* (Venice, 1597)

J. Case, *Summa veterum interpretum in universam dialecticam Aristotelis* (London, 1584)

—, *Summa veterum interpretum in universam dialecticam Aristotelis* (Frankfurt, 1598)

B. Cavalcanti, *La Retorica* (Ferrara, 1559)

D. Chytraeus, *Praecepta Rhetoricae inventionis* (Leipzig, 1562)

Cicero, *Oratio pro lege Manilia, R. Agricolae scholii, F. Sylvii, I. Omphalii commentariis, ac B. Latomi annotationibus et A. Luschi artificio illustrata* (Paris, 1541)

—, *De partitionibus oratoris dialogus* (with the commentaries of Strebaeus, Latomus and Hegendorff, and with Sturm's dialogue) (Paris, 1550)

—, *Topica* (with the commentaries of Boethius, Visorius, Latomus, Melanchthon, Hegendorff and Gouvéa) (Paris, T. Richard, 1550)

Ps. Cicero, *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, ed. H. Caplan (London, 1954)

J. Clichtove, *Fundamentum Logicae*, with Caesarius's commentary (Paris, 1538)

R. Dallington, *A Survey of the Grand Duke's State of Tuscany in the Year of our Lord 1596* (London, 1605)

—, *A Method for Travell Shewed by taking the view of France...* (London, ?1605)

T. Elyot, *The Boke Named the Goverour* (London, 1531)

Erasmus, *Opera omnia*, 10 vols (Leiden, 1703), abbrev. *LB*

—, *Collected Works of Erasmus*, in progress (Toronto, 1974-)

—, *Opus Epistoliarum*, ed. P. S. Allen, H. M. Allen, H. W. Garrod, 12 vols (Oxford 1906-1958)

—, *Adagiorum Collectanea* (Paris, 1500)

—, *Adagia* (Venice, 1508)

—, *De copia*, ed. Betty Knott, *Opera omnia*, I, 6 (Amsterdam, 1988)

—, *Ecclesiastes*, I-II, ed. J. Chomarat, *Opera omnia*, V, 4, (Amsterdam, 1991)

—, *Parabolae*, ed. J. C. Margolin, *Opera omnia*, I, 5, (Amsterdam, 1975)

—, *Stultitiae laus*, *Opera omnia*, IV, 1 (Amsterdam, 1979)

V. Erythraeus, *MIKPOTEXNH seu Medulla rhetoricae Tullianae* (Nuremberg, 1575)

P. Fonseca, *Institutionum dialecticarum libri octo* (Cologne, 1605)

J. Freigius, *De logica iureconsultorum libri duo* (Basel, 1582)

—, 'Petri Rami vita', in P. Ramus, *Praelectiones in Ciceronis orationes octo consulares...* (Basel, 1575)

G. Geldenhouwer (Noviomagus), 'Vita Agricolae', in J. Fichardus, *Virorum qui superiori nostroque seculo eruditio et doctrina illustres atque memorabiles fuerunt vitae* (Frankfurt, 1536), pp. 83<sup>r</sup>-87<sup>r</sup>

George of Trebizond, *Q. Asconii Paediani in Orationes M. Tullii Ciceronis Enarrationes... cum Georgii Trapezuntii in eiusdem Ciceronis Orationem pro Q. Ligario...* (Paris, 1520)

—, *De re dialectica* (Cologne, 1539, reprinted Frankfurt, 1966)

—, *De re dialectica...scholii Ioannis Neomagi et Bartholomaei Latomi illustratus* (Lyons, 1559)

—, *Rheticorum libri V* (Venice, 1523), abbrev. *RLV*

R. Goclenius, *Institutionum logicarum de inventione liber unus* (Marburg, 1598)

Goswin van Halen, 'Vita Agricolae', in J. B. Kan, 'Wesseli Groningensis, Rodolphi Agricolae, Erasmi Roterdamii Vitae...', *Erasmiani Gynmasii programma Litterarium* (Rotterdam, 1894), pp. 4ff.

R. Greene, *Pandosto*, in J. H. P. Pafford ed., *The Winter's Tale* (London, 1963), pp. 181-

225

Guarino Guarini, *Epistolario*, ed. R. Sabbadini, 3 vols., (Venice, 1915-1919)

P. Gunther, *De arte rhetorica* (Strasbourg, 1568)

G. Harvey, *Ciceronianus*, ed. H. S. Wilson, C. A. Forbes (Lincoln, Nebraska, 1945)

C. Hegendorff, *Libri dialecticae legalis quinque* (Paris, 1535)

W. Heytesbury, *Tractatus de senso composito et diviso Regulae eiusdem cum Sophismatibus...* (Venice, 1494)

Horace, *Opera*, ed. G. Fabricius (Leipzig, 1571)

F. Hotman, 'Institutionis dialecticae libri IV', in *Opera*, I (Lyons, 1599)

A. Hunnaeus, *Dialectica seu Generalia Logices Praecepta omnia* (Antwerp, 1585)

—, *Prodidagmata de dialecticis vorum affectionibus et proprietatibus* (Antwerp, 1584)

Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae*, ed. W. M. Lindsay (Oxford, 1911)

C. Javellus, *Logicae compendium* (Paris, 1573)

B. Latomus, *Epitome Commentariorum dialecticae inventionis Rodolphi Agricolae* (Cologne, 1534)

—, *Epitome commentariorum dialecticae inventionis Rodolphi Agricolae* (Paris, 1548)

—, *Summa totius rationis disserendi* (Cologne, 1527)

(J. Lefevre d'Étaples), *In hoc opusculo contentae introductiones, in terminos, in artium divisionem, in suppositionem, in praedicabilia, in divisiones, in praedicamenta, in librum de enunciatione, in 1 priorum, in 2 priorum, in libros posteriorum, in locos dialecticos, in fallacias, in obligationes, in insolubilia* (Paris, 1520). The first two introductions are by J. Clichtove.

A. Libavius, *Dialectica Philippo-Ramaea* (Frankfurt, 1608)

A. Loschi, *Asconius Paedianus in Orationes M. Tullii Ciceronis ...ac Commentariis Antonii Lusci Vincentini* (Strasbourg, 1520)

—, *In Orationes Ciceronis enarrationes Q. A. Paediani, G. Trapezuntii et A. Luschii* (Venice 1477)

Louvain Arts Faculty, *Commentaria in Isagogen Porphyrii et in omnes libros Aristotelis de dialectica* (Louvain, 1568)

M. Luther, *De servo arbitrio* (1525), *Werke*, XVIII (Weimar, 1908)

Martianus Capella, *De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii*, ed. J. Willis (Stuttgart, 1983)

P. Melanchthon, *Opera Omnia*, ed. C. Bretschneider, *Corpus Reformatorum*, 28 vols (Brunswick, 1834-60), abbrev. CR

—, *Dialecticae libri IV* (Lyons, 1534)

—, *De Rhetorica libri tres* (Basel, 1519)

—, *Institutiones rhetoricae* (Hagenau, 1521)

—, *Rhetorices Elementa* (Lyons, 1539)

T. More, 'Letter to Dorp', *Complete Works of St Thomas More*, XV, ed. D. Kinney (New Haven, 1986)

—, *Utopia*, *Complete Works of St Thomas More*, IV, ed. Edward Surtz S.J. and J. H. Hexter (New Haven, 1965)

M. Nizolio, *De veris principiis*, ed. Q. Breen, 2 vols. (Rome, 1956)

W. Ockham, *Summa Logicae*, ed. P. Boehner et al., *Opera philosophica*, I (St Bonaventure, 1974)

Paul of Venice, *Logica parva* (Venice, 1472, reprinted Hildesheim, 1970)

—, *Logica parva*, trans. by A. Perreiah (Munich, 1984)

J. Périon, *De Dialectica libri tres* (Basel, 1549)

Persius, *Satires*, ed. I. Casaubon, 3rd edn. (London, 1647)

Peter of Spain, *Tractatus*, ed. L. M. De Rijk (Assen, 1973)

Plato, *The Collected Dialogues*, ed. H. Hamilton and H. Cairns (Princeton, 1963)

—, *Gorgias*, trans. with notes by T. Irwin (Oxford, 1979)

—, *Protagoras*, trans. with notes by C. C. W. Taylor (Oxford, 1976)

Porphyry, *Categoriarum Supplementa: Porphyrii Isagoge et Liber sex principiorum*, ed. L. Minio-Paluello, *Aristoteles Latinus*, I, 6-7 (Bruges, 1966)

—, *Isagoge*, trans. by E. W. Warren (Toronto, 1975), Medieval Sources in Translation 16

P. Ramus, *Animadversionum Aristotelicarum libri XX* (Paris, 1548)

—, *Aristotelicae animadversiones* (Paris, 1545)

—, *Dialectica Audomari Talaei paelectionibus illustrata* (Cologne, 1573)

—, *Dialecticae institutiones*, 2nd edn (Paris, 1543, repr. Stuttgart, 1964)

—, *Dialecticae libri duo* (Paris, 1574)

—, *Dialecticae libri duo Audomari Talaei paelectionibus illustrati* (Paris, 1560)

—, *Dialectique*, Paris 1555, ed. M. Dassonville (Geneva, 1964)

—, *Institutionum dialecticarum libri III* (Paris, 1547)

—, *Scholae in liberales artes* (Basel, 1569, repr. Hildesheim, 1970)

J. Ringelbergius, *Lucubrations* (Basel, 1541)

—, *Opera* (Lyons, 1531, repr. Nieuwkoop, 1967)

C. Rodolphus, *In Rodolphi Agricolae De Inventione Dialectica ...scholia* (Frankfurt, 1538)

C. Salutati, *Epistolario di Coluccio Salutati*, ed. F. Novati, 4 vols (Rome, 1891-1911)

—, *De laboribus Herculis*, ed. B. L. Ullman, 2 vols (Zurich, 1951)

J. Sanderson, *Institutionum dialecticarum libri quatuor* (Antwerp, 1589)

J. Seton, *Dialectica* (London, 1545)

—, *Dialectica*, with Carter's additions (London, 1584)

P. Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry*, ed. G. Shepherd (Manchester, 1973)

—, *The Poems of Sir Philip Sidney*, ed. W. A. Ringler (Oxford, 1962)

C. Soarez S. J., *De arte rhetorica libri tres* (Venice, 1568)

—, *De arte rhetorica libri tres ex Aristotele, Cicerone et Quintiliano praecipue deprompti* (Seville, 1569)

J. Sturm, *De literarum ludis recte aperiendis* (Strasbourg, 1539)

—, *In Partitiones oratorias Ciceronis dialogi duo* (Strasbourg, 1539)

O. Talon, *Rhetoricae P. Rami paelectionibus observata* (Frankfurt, (A. Wechel), 1581)

Thomas of Erfurt, *Grammatica Speculativa*, ed. G. L. Bursill-Hall (London, 1972)

F. Titelmans, *Dialecticae considerationis libri sex* (Paris, 1579)

F. Toletus *Commentaria una cum quaestionibus in universam Aristotelis dialecticam* (Cologne, 1607)

C. Valerius, *In universam bene dicendi rationem tabula, summam artis rhetoricae complectens* (Antwerp, 1568)

—, *Tabulae quibus totius dialecticae paecepta maxime ad usum disserendi....ordine perspicua digestae* (Antwerp, 1582)

L. Valla, *Opera Omnia* (Basel, 1540, repr. with extra vol., Turin, 1962)

—, *Antidotum Primum*, ed. A. Wesseling (Assen, 1978), abbrev. Wesseling

—, 'Antidotum secundum', *Opera Omnia*, I, pp. 331-366

—, 'Encomium S. Thomae', *Opera omnia*, II, pp. 393-395.

—, *Epistolae*, ed. O. Besomi and M. Regoliosi (Padua, 1984)

—, *Gesta Ferdinand regis Aragonum*, ed. O. Besomi (Padua, 1973)

—, *Repastinatio dialecticae et philosophiae*, ed. G. Zippel (Padua, 1982), abbrev. RDP

—, *De vero falsoque bono*, ed. M. de Panizza Lorch (Bari, 1970)

J. L. Vives, *Opera omnia* (Valencia, 1782-1790, repr. Farnborough, 1964)

—, *Against the Pseudodialecticians*, ed. Rita Guerlac (Dordrecht, 1979)

—, *De conscribendis epistolis libellus* (Paris, 1547)

J. von Plieningen, 'Vita Agricolae' in F. Pfeifer, 'Rudolph Agricola', *Serapeum*, 10 (1849), pp. 97-107, 113-119, abbrev. Johann

J. Visorius, *Compendiosa librorum Rodolphi Agricolae de Inventione dialectica Epitome* (Paris, 1534)

—, *Ingeniosa nec minus elegans ad dialectices candidatos methodus* (Paris, 1534)

William of Sherwood, *Syncategorematic Words*, trans. N. Kretzmann (Minneapolis, 1968)

J. Willichius, *Erotematum dialectices libri tres* (Strasburg, 1560)

T. Wilson, *The Art of Rhetorique* (1560), ed. G. H. Mair (Oxford, 1909)

—, *The Rule of Reason*, ed. R. S. Sprague (Northridge, Calif., 1972) based on London, 1553

H. Welsdalius, *Scholia in dialecticam Ioannis Caesarii* (Cologne, 1559)

L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford, 1974)

## STUDIES

F. Adelmann, *Dietrich von Plieningen* (Munich, 1981)

F. Akkerman, 'Rudolf Agricola, een humanistenleven', *Algemeen Nederlands tijdschrift voor wijsbegeerte*, 75 (1983), pp. 25-43

—, 'De Neolatijnse epistolografie: Rudolf Agricola', *Lampas*, 18 (1985), pp. 319-335

F. Akkerman, C. G. Santing, 'Rudolph Agricola en de Aduarder academie', *Groningse Volksalmanak*, 1987, pp. 7-28

F. Akkerman and A. J. Vanderjagt eds., *Rodolphus Agricola Phrisius* (Leiden, 1988), abbrev. *RAP*

P. S. Allen, *The Age of Erasmus* (Oxford, 1914)

—, 'The Letters of Rudolph Agricola', *The English Historical Review*, 21 (1906), pp. 302-317

*Arts libéraux et philosophie au moyen âge* (Montreal, 1969)

E. J. Ashworth, *Language and Logic in the Post-Medieval Period* (Dordrecht, 1974)

E. Auerbach, *Literary Language and Its Public* (London, 1965)

C. Augustijn, *Erasmus: His Life, Works and Influence* (Toronto, 1991)

T. W. Baldwin, *Shakespere's Small Latine and Lesse Greeke*, 2 vols (Urbana, 1944)

J. Barnes et al. ed., *Science and Speculation* (Cambridge, 1982)

R. Barthes, 'L'ancienne rhétorique: aide-mémoire', *Communications*, 16 (1970), pp. 172-229, translated in *The Semiotic Challenge* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 11-93

M. Baxandall, *Giotto and the Orators* (Oxford, 1971)

—, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy* (London, 1972)

—, 'Rudolph Agricola and the Visual Arts', *Intuition und Kunstwissenschaft. Festschrift für Hanns Swarzenski* (Berlin 1973), pp. 409-418

—, 'Rudolph Agricola on patrons efficient and patrons final: a Renaissance discrimination', *Burlington Magazine*, 124 (1982), pp. 424-425.

O. Besomi and M. Regolosi eds, *Lorenzo Valla e l' umanesimo italiano* (Padua, 1986)

F. J. Bianco, *Die alte Universität Köln* (Cologne, 1855)

P. G. Bietenholz ed., *Contemporaries of Erasmus*, 3 vols, (Toronto, 1984-87)

G. Billanovich, 'Il preumanesimo padovano', in G. Folena ed., *Storia della cultura veneta, 2, Il Trecento* (Padua, 1976), pp. 19-110

O. Bird, 'The Formalizing of the Topics in Mediaeval Logic', *Notre Dame Journal of Formal Logic*, 61 (1960), pp. 138-149

—, 'The Tradition of the Logical Topics: Aristotle to Ockham', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 23 (1962), pp. 307-323

R. R. Bolgar, *The Classical Heritage* (Cambridge, 1954)

S. F. Bonner, *Roman Declamation* (Liverpool, 1969)

Q. Breen, 'Giovanni Pico della Mirandola on the conflict of Philosophy and Rhetoric', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 13 (1952), pp. 384-412

A. Broadie, *The Circle of John Mair* (Oxford, 1985)

N. Bruyère, *Méthode et dialectique dans l'oeuvre de La Ramée* (Paris, 1984)

N. Bruyère-Robinet, 'Le statut de l'invention dans l'oeuvre de La Ramée', *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques*, 70 (1986), pp. 15-24

M. Burnyeat, 'Can the Sceptic live his Scepticism?', in M. Schofield et al, *Doubt and Dogmatism* (Oxford, 1980), pp. 20-53

G. Cambier, 'L'oeuvre poétique et oratoire de Latomus', *Latomus*, 22 (1963), pp. 839-844

—, 'Les œuvres de controverse et de rhétorique de Latomus', *Latomus*, 23 (1964), pp. 820-827

F. Cairns, *Generic Composition in Greek and Roman Poetry* (Edinburgh, 1972)

S. I. Camporeale, 'Da Lorenzo Valla a Tomaso Moro, lo statuto umanistica della teologia', *Memorie domenicane*, n.s., 4 (1973), pp. 9-102

—, 'Lorenzo Valla tra medioevo e rinascimento', *Memorie domenicane*, n.s., 7 (1976), pp. 3-190

—, *Lorenzo Valla: umanesimo e teologia* (Florence, 1972)

—, 'Umanesimo e teologia tra '400 e '500', *Memorie domenicane*, n.s., 8-9 (1977-78), pp. 411-436.

R. Cardini, *La critica del Landino* (Florence, 1973)

G. Castor, *Pléiade Poetics* (Cambridge, 1964)

T. Cave, *The Cornucopian Text* (Oxford, 1979)

T. Charland, *Artes praedicandi* (Paris, 1936)

J. Chomarat, *Grammaire et rhétorique chez Érasme*, 2 vols (Paris, 1981)

D. L. Clark, 'The Rise and Fall of Progymnasmata in Sixteenth Century Grammar Schools', *Speech Monographs*, 19 (1952), pp. 259-263

T. Conley, *Rhetoric in the European Tradition* (New York, 1990)

B. P. Copenhaver and C. B. Schmitt, *Renaissance Philosophy* (Oxford, 1992)

G. da Schio, *Sulla vita a sugli scritti di Antonio Loschi* (Padua, 1858)

H. Denifle and A. Chatelain eds., *Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis*, 4 vols (Paris, 1889-97)

W. A. de Pater, 'La Fonction du lieu et de l'instrument dans les Topiques', in G. E. L. Owen ed., *Aristotle on Dialectic* (Oxford, 1968), pp. 164-188

L. M. De Rijk, *Logica Modernorum*, 2 vols in 3 (Assen, 1962-67)

C. De' Rosmini, *Vita di Francesco Filelfo* (Milan, 1808)

S. Ebbesen, *Commentators and Commentaries on Aristotle's Sophistici Elenchi*, 3 vols (Leiden, 1981)

G. J. Engelhardt, 'Medieval Vestiges in the Rhetoric of Erasmus', *PMLA*, 63 (1948), pp. 739-744

J. D. G. Evans, *Aristotle's Concept of Dialectic* (Cambridge, 1977)

E. Faral, *Les Arts poétiques du XIIe et XIIIe siècle* (Paris, 1924, repr. 1971)

A. Faust, 'Die Dialektik Rudolf Agricolas', *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*, 34 (1922), pp. 118-135

L. J. Flynn S.J., *The De arte rhetorica (1568) by Cyprian Soarez S.J.: A Translation with Introduction and Notes*, Unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Florida, 1955

M. Fois, *Il pensiero cristiano di Lorenzo Valla* (Rome, 1969), abbrev. Fois

K. M. Fredborg, 'The Scholastic Teaching of Rhetoric in the Middle Ages', *Cahiers de l'institut du moyen-âge grec et latin*, 55 (1987), pp. 85-105

M. Fumaroli, *L'âge de l'éloquence* (Geneva, 1980)

E. Garin, 'La letteratura degli umanisti', in E. Cecchi and N. Sapegno eds., *Storia della letteratura Italiana*, III, *Il Quattrocento e l'Ariosto* (Milan, 1966), pp. 7-315

—, *Ritratti di umanisti* (Florence, 1967)

— ed., *Il pensiero pedagogico dello Umanesimo* (Florence, 1958), abbrev. *Pensiero*

— ed., *Prosatori latini del quattrocento* (Milan, 1952)

H. B. Gerl, *Rhetorik als Philosophie* (Munich, 1974)

S. Gibson ed., *Statuta Antiqua Universitatis Oxoniensis* (Oxford, 1931)

P. Glorieux, 'L'Enseignement au moyen âge. Techniques et méthodes en usage à la Faculté de Théologie de Paris au XIII siècle', *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen âge*, 43 (1968), pp. 65-168

C. P. Goujet, *Mémoire historique et littéraire sur le Collège Royal de France* (Paris, 1758, repr. Geneva, 1971)

A. Grafton, *Joseph Scaliger*, I (Oxford, 1983)

—, 'Renaissance readers and ancient texts: comments on some commentators', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 38 (1985), pp. 615-649

—, 'Teacher, Text and Pupil in the Renaissance Classroom', *History of Universities*, 1 (1981), pp. 37-70

A. Grafton and L. Jardine, *From Humanism to the Humanities* (London, 1986)

H. Gray, 'Renaissance Humanism: The Pursuit of Eloquence', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 24 (1963), pp. 497-514

L. D. Green, *John Rainolds's Oxford Lectures on Aristotle's Rhetoric* (Newark, New Jersey, 1986)

N. J. Green-Pedersen, *The Tradition of the Topics in the Middle Ages* (Munich, 1984)

I. Hadot, *Arts libéraux et philosophie dans la pensée antique* (Paris, 1984)

P. Hadot, *Marius Victorinus: Recherches sur sa vie et ses œuvres* (Paris, 1971)

—, 'Philosophie, dialectique, rhétorique dans l'antiquité', *Studia Philosophica*, 39 (1980), pp. 139-166

S. Halliwell, *Aristotle's Poetics* (London, 1986)

P. R. Hardie, *Humanist Exegesis of Poetry in Fifteenth-Century Italy and the Medieval Tradition of Commentary*, M.Phil Thesis, Warburg Institute, London, 1976

O. B. Hardison, *The Enduring Monument* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1962)

K. Hartfelder ed., *Melanchthoniana paedagogica* (Leipzig, 1892)

—, 'Unedierte Briefe von Rudolf Agricola', *Festschrift der badischen Gymnasien* (Karlshruhe, 1886), pp. 1-36, abbrev. *Briefe*

T. Heath, 'Logical Grammar, Grammatical Logic and Humanism in Three German Universities', *Studies in the Renaissance*, 18 (1971), pp. 9-64

C. Hill, *Intellectual Origins of the English Revolution* (Oxford, 1965)

J. N. Hillgarth, *Raymond Lull and Lullism in Fourteenth Century France* (Oxford, 1972)

K. J. Höltgen, 'Synoptische Tabellen in der medizinischen Literatur und die Logik Agricolae und Ramus', *Sudhoffs Archiv*, 49 (1965), pp. 371-390

W. S. Howell, *Logic and Rhetoric in England 1500-1700* (Princeton, 1956)

G. C. Huisman, *Rudolph Agricola: A Bibliography* (Nieuwkoop, 1985)

R. W. Hunt, *The History of Grammar in the Middle Ages: Collected Papers* (Amsterdam, 1980)

J. K. Hyde, *Padua in the Age of Dante* (Manchester, 1966)

J. IJsewijn - G. Tournoy, 'Nuovi contributi per l' elenco dei manoscritti e delle edizioni delle *Elegantiae* di Lorenzo Valla', *Humanistica Lovaniensia*, 18 (1969), pp. 25-41, 20 (1971), pp. 1-5.

T. Irwin, *Aristotle's First Principles* (Oxford, 1990)

L. Jardine, 'Dialectic or Dialectical Rhetoric: Agostino Nifo's Criticism of Lorenzo Valla', *Rivista critica di storia della filosofia*, 36 (1981), pp. 253-270

—, *Francis Bacon* (Cambridge, 1974)

—, 'Lorenzo Valla and the Intellectual Origins of Humanist Dialectic', *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 15 (1977), pp. 143-164, revised version in M. Burnyeat ed., *The Sceptical Tradition* (Berkeley, 1983), pp. 253-286

—, 'The Place of Dialectic Teaching in Sixteenth-Century Cambridge', *Studies in the Renaissance*, 21 (1974), pp. 31-62

P. Joachimsen, 'Loci communes', *Gesammelte Afsätze*, (Aalen, 1970), pp. 76-98, 393-412.

C. Kallendorf, 'Cristoforo Landino's *Aeneid* and the Humanist Critical Tradition', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 36 (1983), pp. 519-546

—, *In Praise of Aeneas* (Hanover, New Hampshire, 1989)

H. Kearney, *Scholars and Gentlemen* (London, 1970)

D. R. Kelley, *Foundations of Modern Historical Scholarship* (New York, 1970)

G. Kennedy, *The Art of Persuasion in Greece* (Princeton, 1963)

—, *The Art of Rhetoric in the Roman World* (Princeton, 1972)

D. Kinney, 'More's letter to Dorp: Remapping the Trivium', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 34 (1981), pp. 179-210

R. King, *Geschichte der Kaiserlichen Universität zu Wien*, Bd 2, (Vienna, 1854)

R. G. Kleinhans, 'Ecclesiastes sive de Ratione concionandi' in R. L. De Molen ed., *Essays on the Works of Erasmus*, (New Haven, 1978), pp. 253-266

W. and M. Kneale, *The Development of Logic* (Oxford, 1962)

K. Kraft and W. Crecelius, 'Beiträge zur Geschichte des Humanismus am Niederrhein und in Westfalen', *Zeitschrift des bergischen Geschichtsvereins*, 11 (1876), pp. 1-9

J. Kraye, 'Moral Philosophy', in C. B. Schmitt et al. ed., *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 303-386

N. Kretzmann et al. ed., *The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1982), abbrev. *CHLMP*

P. O. Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought and Its Sources* (New York, 1979)

H. Lausberg, *Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik*, 2 vols (Munich, 1960)

E. S. Leedham-Green, *Books in Cambridge Inventories*, 2 vols (Cambridge, 1986)

— ed., *Garrett Godfrey's Accounts c. 1527-1533*, Cambridge Bibliographical Society Monograph no. 12 (Cambridge, 1992)

G. Leff, *William of Ockham* (Manchester, 1975)

M. Leff, 'Boethius's *De differentiis topicis*, Book IV', in J. J. Murphy ed., *Medieval Eloquence* (Berkeley, 1978), pp. 3-24

L. Lukacs ed., *Monumenta Paedagogica Societatis Iesu*, III (Rome, 1974)

P. Mack, 'Agricola's Use of the Comparison between Writing and the Visual Arts', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 55 (1992)

—, *Permeations of Renaissance Dialectic into English Discourse, c.1580-c.1620*, M.Phil thesis, Warburg Institute, London, 1978

—, 'Rhetoric and the Essay', *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, forthcoming

—, *Rudolph Agricola and Renaissance Dialectic*, Unpublished Ph.D thesis, Warburg Institute, London, 1983

—, 'Rudolph Agricola's Reading of Literature', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 48 (1985), pp. 23-41

—, 'Valla's Dialectic in the North: A Commentary on Peter of Spain by Gerardus Listrius', *Vivarium*, 21 (1983), pp. 58-72

—, 'Valla's Dialectic in the North 2: Further Commentaries', *Vivarium*, 30 (1992), pp. 256-75

I. McLean, 'Philosophical books in European markets, 1570-1630: the case of Ramus', in J. Henry and S. Hutton eds., *New Perspectives in Renaissance Thought, Essays in Memory of Charles B. Schmitt* (London, 1990), pp. 253-63

J. R. McNally, *An Appraisal of Rudolph Agricola's De inventione dialectica libri tres as a Philosophy of Artistic Discourse*, Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Iowa, 1966.

—, 'Prima pars dialecticae: The Influence of Agricolan Dialectic Upon English Accounts of Invention', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 21 (1968), pp. 166-177

—, 'Rudolph Agricola's *De inventione dialectica*: A Translation of Selected Chapters', *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 34 (1967), pp. 393-422

F. Madan, 'The Daily Ledger of John Dorne', in C. R. L. Fletcher ed., *Collectanea I* (Oxford, 1885), pp. 73-177

A. Maierù, *Terminologia logica della tarda scolastica* (Rome, 1972)

—, 'Il Tractatus de sensu composito et diviso di Guglielmo Heytesbury', *Rivista critica di storia della filosofia*, 21 (1966), pp. 243-263

G. Mancini, *Vita di Lorenzo Valla* (Florence, 1891)

N. Mann, *Petrarch* (Oxford, 1984)

J. Martin, *Antike Rhetorik: Technik und Methode* (Munich, 1974)

W. Maurer, *Der junge Melanchthon*, 2 vols., (Göttingen, 1967-69)

—, 'Melanchthon's *Loci Comunes* von 1521 als wissenschaftliche Programmschrift', *Luther Jahrbuch*, 42 (1960), pp. 1-51

K. Meerhoff, 'Logic and Eloquence: A Ramusian Revolution?', *Argumentation*, 5:4 (1991), pp. 357-74

—, 'Mélancthon, lecteur d'Agricola: rhétorique et analyse textuelle', *Réforme - Humanisme - Renaissance*, no. 30, vol. XVI (1990) pp. 5-22

—, *Rhétorique et poétique au XVIe siècle en France* (Leiden, 1986)

—, 'Rhétorique néolatine et culture vernaculaire: Les analyses textuelles de Barthélemy Aneau', *Études littéraires*, 24:3 (1992)

—, 'The Significance of Philip Melanchthon's Rhetoric in the Renaissance', in P. Mack ed., *Renaissance Rhetoric* (London, forthcoming)

R. G. G. Mercer, *The Teaching of Gasparino Barzizza* (London, 1979).

E. Meuthen, *Kölner Universitätsgeschichte*, I, *Die alte Universität* (Cologne, 1988)

P. Michaud-Quantin, 'L'Emploi des termes logica et dialectica au moyen âge' in *Arts libéraux et philosophie au moyen âge* (Montreal, 1969)

P. Miller, *The New England Mind in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass., 1939)

A. J. Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship*, 2nd edn (Aldershot, 1988)

A. J. Minnis and A. B. Scott eds, *Medieval Literary Theory and Criticism: The Commentary*

*Tradition*, revised edition (Oxford, 1991)

J. Monfasani, 'Bessarion, Valla, Agricola and Erasmus', *Rinascimento*, 28 (1988), pp. 319-320

—, 'The Byzantine Rhetorical Tradition and the Renaissance', in J. J. Murphy ed., *Renaissance Eloquence* (Berkeley, 1983), pp. 174-187

—, *George of Trebizond* (Leiden, 1976), abbrev. Monfasani

—, 'Humanism and Rhetoric', in A. Rabil jr. ed., *Renaissance Humanism: Foundations, Forms and Legacy*, 3 vols. (Philadelphia, 1988), III, pp. 171-235

—, 'Lorenzo Valla and Rudolph Agricola', *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 28 (1990), pp. 181-199

—, Review of *RDP, Rivista di letteratura italiana*, 2 (1984), pp. 177-194

—, 'Was Lorenzo Valla an ordinary language philosopher?', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 50 (1989), pp. 309-323

— ed., *Collectanea Trapezuntiana* (Binghamton, 1984)

E. A. Moody, 'The Medieval Contribution to Logic', in Moody, *Studies in Medieval Philosophy, Science and Logic* (Berkeley, 1975), pp. 371-392

K. Morneweg, *Johann von Dalberg* (Heidelberg, 1887)

J. B. Mullinger, *The University of Cambridge*, 2 vols (Cambridge, 1873-4)

J. J. Murphy, *Renaissance Rhetoric: A Short Title Catalogue* (New York, 1981)

—, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages* (Berkeley, 1974)

— ed., *Medieval Eloquence* (Berkeley, 1978)

R. Nadeau, 'The Progymnasmata of Aphthonius in translation', *Speech Monographs*, 19 (1952), pp. 264-285

M. A. Nauwelaerts, *Rodolphus Agricola* (The Hague, 1963)

C. G. Noreña, *Juan Luis Vives* (The Hague, 1970)

J. W. O'Malley, *Praise and Blame in Renaissance Rome* (Durham, North Carolina, 1979)

W. J. Ong, 'Commonplace rhapsody: Ravisius Textor, Zwinger and Shakespeare', in R. R. Bolgar ed., *Classical Influences on European Culture, AD 1500-1700* (Cambridge, 1976), pp. 91-126

—, *Ramus and Talon Inventory* (Cambridge, Mass, 1958)

—, *Ramus, Method and the Decay of Dialogue* (Cambridge, Mass, 1958)

G. E. L. Owen, 'Logic and Metaphysics in some Earlier Works of Aristotle', in I. Düring and Owen eds., *Aristotle and Plato in the Mid-Fourth Century* (Gothenburg, 1960), pp. 163-190, repr. in Owen, *Logic, Science and Dialectic* (London, 1986), pp. 180-199

— ed., *Aristotle on Dialectic* (Oxford, 1968)

A. Patterson, *Hermogenes and the Renaissance* (Princeton, 1970)

L. Pernot, 'Lieu et lieu commun dans la rhétorique antique', *Bulletin de l'Association Guillaume Budé*, sér 4, 1986, pp. 253-284

M. M. Phillips, *The Adages of Erasmus* (Cambridge, 1964)

V. Piano Mortari, 'Dialettica e Giurisprudenza', *Annali di storia dell diritto*, I (1957), pp. 293-401

G. W. Pigman III, 'Barzizza's Studies of Cicero', *Rinascimento*, n.s. 21 (1981), pp. 121-133

—, 'Imitation and the Renaissance Sense of the Past: The Reception of Erasmus's *Ciceronianus*', *The Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 9 (1979), pp. 155-177

—, 'Versions of Imitation in the Renaissance', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 33 (1980), pp. 1-32

J. Pinborg, *Logik und Semantik im Mittelalter* (Stuttgart, 1972)

—, 'Topik und Syllogistik im Mittelalter', in F. Hoffman et al. eds., *Sapienter ordinare. Festgabe für Erich Kleineidam* (Leipzig, 1969), pp. 151-178

H. Pouillon, 'Le premier traité des propriétés transcendantes', *Revue néoscholastique de philosophie*, 42 (1939), pp. 40-77

G. Radetti, 'La religione di Lorenzo Valla', in *Medioevo e Rinascimento, Studi in onore di Bruno Nardi* (Florence, 1955), II, pp. 595-620

P. Radouant, 'L'union de l'éloquence et de la philosophie au temps de Ramus', *Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France*, 31 (1924), pp. 161-192

P. Rajna, 'Le denominazioni Trivium e Quadrivium', *Studi Medievali*, n.s. 1 (1928), pp. 4-36

L. M. Regis, *L'Opinion selon Aristote* (Paris, 1935)

W. Risse, *Bibliographia Logica*, I, 1472-1800 (Hildesheim, 1965)

—, *Die Logik der Neuzeit*, I, 1500-1640 (Stuttgart, 1964)

H. D. Rix, 'The editions of Erasmus's *De Copia*', *Studies in Philology*, 43 (1946), pp. 595-618

R. Robinson, *Plato's Earlier Dialectic*, 2nd edn (Oxford, 1953)

H. Roos, 'Le Trivium à l'université au XIIIe siècle' *Arts libéraux et philosophie au moyen âge* (Montreal, 1969), pp. 193-97

D. A. Russell, *Greek Declamation* (Cambridge, 1983)

D. A. Russell and N. G. Wilson, *Menander Rhetor* (Oxford, 1981)

R. Sabbadini, 'Cronologia documentata della vita di Lorenzo Valla', in L. Barozzi, R. Sabbadini, *Studi sul Panormita e sul Valla* (Florence, 1891) repr. in L. Valla, *Opera omnia*, II (Turin, 1962), abbrev. *Cron.*

—, *Il metodo degli umanisti* (Florence, 1920)

—, *Le scoperte dei codici latini e greci ne' secoli XIV e XV*, 2 vols. (Florence 1905-14, reprinted Florence, 1967)

—, *Storia del Ciceronianismo* (Turin, 1886)

—, *Vita di Guarino Veronese* (Genova, 1891), and *La scuola e gli studi di Guarino Veronese* (Catania, 1896), reprinted together as *Guariniana* (Turin, 1964)

C. B. Schmitt, *John Case and Aristotelianism in Renaissance England* (Kingston, Ontario, 1983)

C. B. Schmitt, Q. Skinner, E. Kessler, J. Kraye eds, *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1988)

A. Seifert, *Die Universität Ingolstadt im 15. und 16. Jahrhundert*, (Berlin, 1973)

J. E. Seigel, *Rhetoric and Philosophy in Renaissance Humanism* (Princeton, 1968)

P. Sharratt, 'Peter Ramus and the Reform of the University' in P. Sharratt ed., *French Renaissance Studies 1540-70* (Edinburgh, 1976), pp. 4-20

—, 'The present state of studies on Ramus', *Studi Francesi*, 47-8 (1972), pp. 201-213

—, 'Recent Work on Ramus', *Rhetorica*, 5 (1987), pp. 7-58

D. Shuger, *Sacred Rhetoric* (Princeton, 1988)

F. Solmsen, 'Aristotle and Cicero on the Orator's Playing upon the Feelings', *Classical Philology*, 33 (1938), pp. 390-404

—, *Die Entwicklung der aristotelischen Logik und Rhetorik* (Berlin, 1929), Neue philologische Untersuchungen 4

L. A. Sonnino, *A Handbook to Sixteenth Century Rhetoric* (London, 1968)

L. W. Spitz, *The Religious Renaissance of the German Humanists* (Cambridge, Mass., 1963)

L. W. Spitz, A. Benjamin, 'Rudolph Agricola's 'Exhortatio ad Clerum Wormatiensem'', *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, 54 (1963), pp. 1-15

J. Stenzel, *Plato's Method of Dialectic*, trans. D. J. Allan (New York, 1964)

N. Struever, 'Lorenzo Valla's Grammar of Subject and Object', *I Tatti Studies*, 2 (1987), pp. 239-267

E. Stump, *Boethius's De topicis differentiis* (Ithaca, 1978)

M. Tavoni, *Latino, grammatica, volgare* (Padua, 1984)

C. Trinkaus, *In Our Image and Likeness*, 2 vols (London, 1970)

R. Tuve, *Elizabethan and Metaphysical Imagery* (Chicago, 1947)

M. Van der Poel ed., *Rudolf Agricola: Over dialectica en humanisme* (Baarn, 1991)

H. E. J. M. Van der Velden, *Rodolphus Agricola* (Leiden, 1911)

C. Vasoli, *La dialettica e la retorica dell' Umanesimo* (Milan, 1968)

B. Vickers, 'Epilectic and Epic in the Renaissance', *New Literary History*, 14 (1982-83), pp. 497-537

—, *In Defence of Rhetoric* (Oxford, 1988)

R. Volkmann, *Die Rhetorik der Griechen und Römer* (Leipzig, 1885)

C. Waddington, *Ramus: sa vie, ses écrits et ses opinions* (Paris, 1855)

J. O. Ward, *Artificiosa Eloquenteria in the Middle Ages*, 2 vols, Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Toronto, 1972

—, 'From Antiquity to the Renaissance: Glosses and Commentaries on Cicero's *Rhetorica*',

in J. J. Murphy ed., *Medieval Eloquence* (Berkeley, 1978)

—, 'Renaissance Commentators on Ciceronian Rhetoric', in J. J. Murphy ed., *Renaissance Eloquence* (Berkeley, 1983), pp. 127-173

M. Warner, *Philosophical Finesse* (Oxford, 1989)

R. Waswo, *Language and Meaning in the Renaissance* (Princeton, 1987)

—, 'The ordinary language philosophy of Lorenzo Valla', *Bibliothèque d'humanisme et renaissance*, 41 (1979), pp. 255-271

E. H. Waterbolk, *Een hond in het bad* (Groningen, 1966)

J. M. Weiss, 'Ecclesiastes and Erasmus', *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, 65 (1974), pp. 83-107

—, 'Medieval Ars Dictaminis and the Beginnings of Humanism: A New Construction of the Problem', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 35 (1982), pp. 1-35

—, 'The six lives of Rudolph Agricola: forms and functions of the humanist biography', *Humanistica Lovaniensia*, 30 (1981), pp. 19-39

H. Wieruszowski, 'Ars dictaminis in the time of Dante', in her *Politics and Culture in Medieval Spain and Italy* (Rome, 1971), pp. 359-77

—, 'Rhetoric and the Classics in Italian Education of the Thirteenth Century', *Studia Gratiana*, 11 (Collectanea Stephan Kuttner 1) (Bologna, 1967), pp. 169-207

C. Wilson, *William Heytesbury* (Madison, 1956)

R. G. Witt, *Hercules at the Crossroads. The Life, Works, and Thought of Coluccio Salutati* (Durham, North Carolina, 1985)

E. Wolff, *Un humaniste Luxembourgeois au XV<sup>e</sup> siècle Barthélémy Latomus D'Arlon* (Luxembourg, 1902)

W. H. Woodward, *Studies in Education during the Age of the Renaissance 1400-1600* (Cambridge, 1906)

F. A. Yates, *The Art of Memory* (London, 1969)

—, 'The Art Of Ramon Lull', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 27 (1964), pp. 115-173, reprinted in her *Collected Essays I: Lull and Bruno* (London, 1982)

—, 'The Ciceronian Art of Memory', in *Medioevo e Rinascimento. Studi in onore di Bruni Nardi* (Florence, 1955), II, pp. 871-903

G. Zippel, 'L'autodifesa di Lorenzo Valla per il processo dell'inquisizione napoletana (1444)', *Italia medioevale e umanistica*, 13 (1970), pp. 59-94

G. Zippel, 'Note sulle redazioni della *dialectica* di Lorenzo Valla', *Archivio storico per le provincie Parmensi*, 4a serie, IX (1957), pp. 301-14.



## GENERAL INDEX

Some authors' names (notably Agricola, Aristotle, Boethius, Cicero, Quintilian and Valla) occur so often in the book that it would be impractical to index every occurrence. In such cases I have given a range of pages where the references are most frequent, and have indexed separately particular works or issues and unexpected occurrences.

Abelard, Peter, 8  
Abstract Concepts, 60  
Action, 42, 47-49, 245, 300, 317  
Adam, 55  
Addyter, Henry, 369  
Adjacents, 149, 166, 245, 300, 317  
Adjuncts, 165-66, 330, 349, 354  
Aduard Academy, 118, 126  
Agricola, Johann, 119, 258  
Agricola, Rudolph, 4, 115, 117-374  
and Valla, 244-51  
categories, 250  
commentary on *Pro lege Manilia*, 229-33,  
266, 291  
*De formando studio*, 127, 259, 309, 319,  
321, 323  
Definition of Dialectic, 173-77  
Dialectic, 255-56  
Disposition, 218-27  
impact of his general ideas, 364  
in the university syllabus, 291-302  
Invention, 186-89  
Letters, 129, 315  
Life, 117-20, 126-29  
Literary Examples, 240-43  
Louvain edition, 259-62  
Manuscript diffusion, 257-59  
meaning of *probabiliter*, 169-73  
on universals, 291  
*Oration in Praise of Philosophy*, 119  
Outline of *De inventione dialectica*, 120-  
26  
Pattern of printing, 277  
Pleasing, 213-18  
Poems, 129  
*Questions on Universals*, 141  
Rhetoric, 252-55  
Step-by-step methods, 234  
Summary of Disposition, 225  
Summary of Invention, 235-37  
Table of All Editions, 273  
Use of Dialectic, 227-43  
Use of the topics, 142  
used in textbooks, 298-302  
Worked Examples, 237-40  
Alardus of Amsterdam, 121, 146, 248, 258-  
65, 281, 289-91, 313, 321  
Albert of Saxony, 92  
Alberti, Leon Battista, 197  
Albertus Magnus, 67, 92, 94  
Alchemy, 48  
Alfonso the Magnanimous, King of Naples,  
22  
Amplification, 211-12, 306, 312, 325, 326,  
333  
Andrewes, Lancelot, 3  
Aneau, Barthélemy, 368  
Antiochus, 98  
Antonio da Rho, 24  
Apel, Johannes, 261  
Aphthonius, 129, 362, 363  
Apuleius, 180  
Aquinas, St Thomas, 25 32, 59  
Argument  
Disposition, 223  
and Renaissance Studies, 365-67  
argumentative force of language, 86  
Argumentation, 190-95, 199-202, 242  
Aristotle, 27, 61-64, 68, 72, 96, 100, 109,  
114, 157, 162, 176, 179, 182, 203, 221,  
250, 260, 269, 282, 325, 334-35, 342-44,  
346, 356-59  
*Categories*, 32, 37-51, 64, 89, 123, 220,  
246, 326, 332, 346  
*De anima*, 70  
*De interpretatione*, 32, 74-78, 90  
*Ethics*, 69  
list of Valla's criticisms, 69-72

*Metaphysics*, 32, 69, 101  
*Organon*, 6-7, 256, 280, 291-302, 339  
*Physics*, 72, 221  
*Poetics*, 216  
*Posterior Analytics*, 123, 219, 356  
*Prior Analytics*, 88, 90, 103  
*Rhetoric*, 8, 123, 206, 208, 209, 244, 254, 279, 360  
*Sophistical Refutations*, 90, 254  
*Topica*, 122, 132, 169, 219, 294, 317  
*Ars dictaminis*, 9, 13, 362  
Asconius Paedianus, 18  
Asinius Pollio, 245  
Astronomy, 72  
Ath, 272  
St Augustine, 19, 73, 124, 311, 314  
Augustus, Roman emperor 160  
Aulus Gellius, 19, 105  
Aurispa, Giovanni, 23, 25  
Babel, 55  
Bacon, Sir Francis, 3, 373  
Baenst, Paul de, 118  
Barbaro, Ermolao, 69 119, 129, 333  
Barbireau, Jacques, 127, 243, 258, 321  
Bartolus, 24  
Barzizza, Gasparino, 14, 16, 24  
Basel, 271, 277  
Bersman, Gregory, 299, 360  
Billingham, Richard, 11  
Boethius, 8, 27, 64, 76-80, 87-88, 91, 95, 97, 104, 122, 134-35, 142, 151, 181, 246, 247, 282, 285, 299, 315, 330, 347, 353  
St Bonaventure, 125  
Brevity, 217  
Bruni, Leonardo, 14, 16, 23, 25  
Bucoldianus, Gerard, 299, 301, 363  
Budé, François, 239, 310  
Burgos, 272  
Buridan, Jean, 11  
Burley, Walter, 11, 278  
Burton, Robert, 2  
Caesarius, Johann, 278, 292, 293, 294, 300, 322, 325, 358, 361  
Callistus III, Pope, 25  
Caloria, Tommaso, 15  
Cambridge, 278, 291, 295, 296  
Cantiuncula, Claudius, 261, 299  
Carneades, 98  
Casaubon, Isaac, 210  
Case, John, 280, 299  
Categories, 326, 332  
Catherine of Aragon, 314  
Causes, 156-59, 331, 349, 353  
Cavalcanti, Bartolomeo, 361  
Chomsky, Noam, 13  
Chrysippus, 98  
Chrysoloras, Manuel, 14  
Cicero, 8, 24, 98, 99, 118, 122, 124, 129, 135, 168, 178, 182, 188, 212, 218, 241, 245, 247, 260, 284, 285, 291, 299, 304, 305, 321, 325, 329, 331, 335, 347, 354  
*De inventione*, 5, 23, 80, 173  
*De officiis*, 292  
*De oratore*, 1, 123, 197, 206, 219, 292, 347, 360  
*In Verrem*, 187  
*Orations*, 18, 367  
*Orator*, 137, 342-44  
*Partitiores oratoriae*, 122, 266, 298, 330, 351, 360  
*Pro Caelio*, 200, 222, 223  
*Pro Cluentio*, 187, 198, 221, 222, 242  
*Pro lege Manilia*, 19, 200, 229-33, 242, 254  
*Pro Ligario*, 200  
*Pro Marcello*, 22, 345  
*Pro Milone*, 18, 22, 187, 196, 200, 204-7, 221, 223, 242  
*Pro Murena*, 221, 222  
*Pro Plancio*, 187, 200  
*Topica*, 133, 143, 244, 266, 298, 300, 315, 330, 356, 360  
*Tusculan Disputations*, 189  
Cincio de Rustici, 23  
Clichtove, Josse, 357  
Cologne, 262-65, 281, 286, 294  
Table of Editions, 263  
Commonplace book, 127, 235, 309, 318, 319, 323, 372  
Communication studies, 374  
Comparison, 161-65, 300, 302, 317  
Connexa, 149, 166  
Consequences, 12, 326  
Contingents, 149, 165  
Contrary Words, 89  
*Copia*, 216-18, 242, 253, 301 305, 312, 316, 328, 363, 364  
Cromwell, Thomas, 278  
Croy, William, 314  
Dalberg, Johann von, 118, 126-29, 258, 321  
Dallington, Sir Richard, 2  
Declamation, 7, 23, 84, 105-8, 189, 234, 238-40, 283  
Definition, 151-56, 299, 315, 325, 328, 330, 332, 336  
Quintilian, 41  
Valla, 41-42, 57  
Demosthenes, 212, 321  
*Destinata*, 148, 158  
Dialectic

**D**efinition, 2, 4-9, 26, 111-13, 168-69, 173-77, 251, 255-56, 328, 338, 348, 364  
 Humanist attitudes to, 15-17  
 in the sixteenth century, 356-59  
 teaching in the Middle Ages, 10, 135  
**D**ialectical invention, 120, 168-89, 317  
**D**ialectical reading, 227-33, 287, 291, 300, 318, 322, 332, 334, 350, 351, 364, 367-73, 375  
**D**ilemma, 85, 106  
**D**isposition, 18, 218-27, 253, 301, 313, 325, 338, 346, 348, 352, 364, 375  
**D**isputation, 7, 10, 12, 251, 292, 295  
**D**onne, John, 3  
**D**orp, Martin, 260, 314, 317  
**E**ffects, 156-59, 349  
**E**lyot, Sir Thomas, 278, 298  
**E**motional manipulation, 203-11, 237, 253, 301, 306, 312, 325, 364  
**E**nthymeme, 87, 200, 326  
**E**picheireme, 87  
**E**pideictic, 187-88, 219, 223, 254, 291  
**E**rasmus, 115, 262, 281, 291, 303-14, 320, 372  
*Adagia*, 304  
*De copia*, 212, 218, 239, 277, 280, 298, 311, 313, 323, 333, 362  
*Ecclesiastae*, 311-12  
*Parabolae*, 302, 305  
 Table of editions of *De copia*, 276  
**E**rcole I d'Este, 119  
**E**rythraeus, Valentinus, 360  
*Ethos*, 5, 193, 216, 236  
**E**tymology, 159-61  
**E**ucherius, 368  
**E**xample, 87, 200  
**E**xposition, 190-99, 242, 352  
**F**aber, James, 259  
**F**abricius, G, 210  
**F**azio, Bartolomeo, 24  
**F**ilelfo, Francesco, 16  
**F**isher, John, 261  
**F**onseca, Pedro, 294, 357  
**F**our-part oration, 5, 18, 191, 219, 221, 237, 251, 333, 342  
**F**rankfurt, 272  
**F**rederici, Wilhelm, 126  
**F**reigius, Johannes, 334, 337, 340  
  
**G**aetano of Thiene, 11  
**G**alen, 331, 351  
**G**ansfort, Wessel, 126  
**G**eldenhouwer, Gerard, 118, 260  
  
**G**eorge of Trebizond, 115, 193, 239, 242, 250, 266, 278, 293, 310, 356, 358, 361, 365  
 commentary on *Pro Ligario*, 18, 21  
*Isagoge dialectica*, 16  
*Rheticorum libri V*, 20-23  
**G**erard, Cornelius, 303  
**G**illis, Peter, 260  
**G**oclenius, Rudolphus, 359  
**G**odfrey, Garrett, 278  
**G**ouvéa, Andrea de, 286  
**G**rammar, 14, 26  
**G**reek, 14, 20, 22, 68, 100-102, 109, 119, 120, 129, 292, 295, 296, 297, 320, 358, 360  
**G**reene, Robert, 371  
**G**uarino Guarini, da Verona, 14, 19-20, 25, 119, 309, 367  
**G**uarino, Battista, 20, 119  
**G**unther, P, 360  
  
**H**adamarius, Reinardus, 264, 290  
**H**arvey, Gabriel, 279, 356  
**H**egendorff, Christopher, 261, 300  
**H**egius, Alexander, 126, 245, 258, 260, 280, 303, 309, 310, 314  
**H**elmstedt, 270  
**H**eraclitus, 180  
**H**ermann, Haio, 262  
**H**ermogenes, 20, 266, 298, 310, 351, 361  
**H**erodotus, 25  
**H**eytesbury, William of, 11, 12, 91  
**H**istory, 15, 20, 24, 68, 195, 220, 248  
**H**omer, 104, 119, 186, 291  
**H**orace, 99, 104, 210  
**H**otman, Fran ois, 300  
**H**umanism, 9, 13-23, 24, 114  
 and literary texts, 17-23  
**H**unnaeus, Augustinus, 271, 295, 357  
  
**I**mitation, 209, 234, 241, 325, 346, 350  
**I**nduction, 83, 85, 87, 88, 200, 316, 326  
**I**ngolstadt, 270, 294  
**I**nnocent VIII, Pope, 128  
*Insolubilia*, 12, 92  
**I**nvention, 2, 21, 186-89, 250, 305, 316, 328-29, 338, 346, 364  
**I**sidore of Seville, 8  
**I**socrates, 1, 7, 160, 212, 304  
  
**J**acobsz., Dirk, 262  
**J**avellus, Chrysostom, 357  
**S**t Jerome, 291  
**J**udgement, 3  
**J**uvenal, 104, 210  
  
**L**actantius, 92, 106

Langen, Rudolph von, 126  
 Late Scholastic Logic, 110, 356-57  
 and Valla, 92-94  
 Latin Usage, 75, 79, 91, 95, 102-04  
 Latomus, Bartholomaeus, 232, 263, 265-68,  
 269, 276, 281, 290, 299, 301, 313, 363  
 Lefèvre d'Étaples, Jacques 357  
 Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm, 117  
 Leipzig, 272  
 Libavius, Andrea, 299, 359  
 Liberal arts, 8-9, 344  
 Listrius, Gerardus, 116  
 Livy, 24, 221  
 Loschi, Antonio, 18-19, 23, 24, 207, 232,  
 242, 367  
 Lossius, Johann Christian, 358  
 Louvain, 271, 286, 296, 314  
 Lovato Lovati, 14  
 Lucan, 104, 164, 228, 241, 288  
 Lucian, 180  
 Lucretius, 104  
 Luther, Martin, 320, 323  
 Lycosthenes, Conrad, 302, 304  
 Lyl, John, 3  
 Lyons, 272, 277, 368

Macrobius, 19, 180  
 Mainz, 270, 292  
 Mair, John, 356  
 Maps, 277, 281  
 Marburg, 270  
 Marsuppini, Carlo, 25  
 Martens, Dirk, 260  
 Martianus Capella, 8  
 Martin V, Pope, 24  
 Mary Tudor, Queen of England, 314  
 Material implication, 255  
 Mathematical Points, 67  
 Mathew, Toby, 368  
 Matter and Form, 61  
 Maximilian, Emperor, 126  
 Medieval logic, 11-13, 291, 326  
 Valla's view, 113  
 Melanchthon, 128, 259, 261, 270, 278, 280,  
 281, 297, 300, 315, 320-34, 355, 357,  
 356-59, 361, 368  
 Dialectical works, 323-34  
*Loci communes*, 323  
 Rhetorical works, 323-34  
 Menander Rhetor, 219  
 Method, 326, 329, 338-39, 346, 351-52,  
 364  
 Modal proposition, 80, 90  
*Modi significandi*, 93  
 Montaigne, Michel de, 3, 373  
 Moorman, Frederick, 126  
 Moral philosophy, 15, 31, 74, 90

More, Sir Thomas, 115  
*Letter to Dorp*, 7, 317  
*Utopia*, 260, 368  
 Müller, Johannes (Regiomontanus), 118  
 Music, 119, 127  
 Mussato, Albertino, 14

Nashe, Thomas, 3  
 Neuss, Heinrich von, 262  
 Nifo, Agostino, 116  
 Nizolio, Mario, 117  
 Noviomagus, Joannes, 264, 281  
 Nowell, Alexander, 280

Obligations, 12  
 Occo, Adolph, 118, 126-29, 240, 258, 262  
 Occo, Pompeius, 262  
 Ockham, William of, 11, 59, 60, 92, 94  
 Oecolampadius, Johannes, 321  
 Olisegerus, Henry, 286  
 Omphalius, Jacobus, 232, 265, 300  
 Opposites, 149  
 Ordinary language, 63, 95  
 Ordinary language philosophy, 57-58  
 Ovid, 104, 160, 221  
 Oxford, 279, 292

Pachimerius, George, 293  
 Panormita (Antonio Beccadelli), 23, 24  
 Paris, 265-70, 276, 286, 344  
 Table of Editions, 268  
*Pathos*, 5, 193, 203-11  
 St Paul, 8, 30, 73, 323  
 Paul of Pergola, 11  
 Paul of Venice, 11, 16, 92  
 Périer, Joachim, 358  
 Persius, 104, 210  
 Peter of Spain, 6, 12, 61, 66, 76, 91, 123,  
 135, 247, 282, 285, 293, 330, 357  
 Petrarch, Francis, 14-15, 339  
 Philosophy, 26, 29, 41, 45, 96-98, 109-10,  
 127, 181  
 Phrissemius, Johannes Matthaeus, 146, 247,  
 260, 263, 264, 268, 286, 289-91  
 Pico della Mirandola, Giovanni, 69, 333  
 Piscator, Johannes, 233  
 Plato, 6, 8, 97, 129, 144, 175, 181, 215,  
 331, 346, 348, 351  
 Plautus, 104, 240  
 Plieningen, Dietrich von, 118-19, 257-58  
 Plieningen, Johann von, 118, 128, 258  
 Pliny, the elder, 19, 129, 216, 221  
 Pliny, the younger, 7, 119, 129  
 Poetry, 213, 215, 220  
 Poggio Bracciolini, 14, 23, 24, 25, 115  
 Polenton, Sicco, 18  
 Poliziano, Angelo, 367

Porphyry, 37, 64-67, 89, 96, 247, 291-302, 339, 342  
 Practice, 240, 350  
 Pragmatics, 374  
 Predicables, 37, 88-89, 144, 183, 250, 325, 332, 346  
 Priscian, 51, 97, 100  
*Probatio propositionis*, 12  
 Proposition, 12, 32, 80-84, 184, 185, 223, 326, 338  
 Psalm 19, 369  
 pseudo-Quintilian, 228, 242  
 Pythagoras, 109  
 Quality, 43, 46-47, 50, 51, 62, 64, 245  
 Question, 181-89, 222-23, 289, 301, 325, 349, 364  
 Quintilian, 5, 8, 23-26, 32, 38, 41, 49-51, 80-88, 95, 97, 100, 104, 114, 118, 122, 124, 129, 156, 163, 172, 176, 198, 207, 208, 210, 218, 238-40, 241, 244, 247, 254, 279, 283, 288, 292, 298, 304, 305-11, 315, 325, 335, 342, 344, 357, 359-62, 366, 367  
     Amplification, 212  
 Rabelais, François, 3  
 Rainolds, John, 279, 301  
 Ramus, Peter, 221, 233, 266, 269, 275, 302, 334-57, 356, 359, 361  
     Controversial works, 342-44  
     Editions used, 335  
     Table of editions, 274  
 Reading and Writing in the Renaissance, 367-73  
 Renaissance, 366  
 Renaissance Argument and Modern Education, 374-76  
 Reuchlin, Johann, 129, 258, 321  
 Rhetoric  
     Definition, 2, 4-9, 26, 111-13, 154, 169, 214, 251, 252-55, 339, 364  
     in the sixteenth century, 363  
*Rhetorica ad Herennium*, 5, 20, 80, 91, 123, 124, 190, 209, 220, 292, 359-62  
 Richilius, Matthaeus, 118  
 Ringelbergius, Joachim, 262, 299, 358, 360  
 Rinuccio di Castiglione, 23  
 Rodolphus, Caspar, 270, 289-91  
 Rogers, John, 368  
 Rolandino, 13  
 Rusch, Adolph, 128  
 Sallust, 186  
 Salutati, Coluccio, 15, 17  
 Sanderson, John, 280, 299, 358  
 Sacerius, Erasmus, 358  
 Scaliger, Julius Caesar, 219  
 Scepticism, 83, 109, 181, 248  
 Schürer, Matthias, 304  
 Scotus, John Duns, 11, 118, 198, 278  
 Scrivani, Melchior, 24  
 Seneca, 17, 24, 100, 200, 210, 228  
 Serra, Giovanni, 28, 92  
 Seton, John, 278, 299, 358  
 Sextus Empiricus, 98  
 Shakespeare, William, 3  
 Sidney, Sir Philip, 1-3  
 Similars, 161-65  
 Soarez, Cyprian, 98, 106, 301, 361  
 Socrates, 109  
 Sophisms, 12, 90-92, 326, 357  
 Sorites, 85, 98-100, 326  
 Soul, 73  
 Spangel, Pallas, 321  
 Sports, 129  
 Square of Contraries, 76-80  
 Status theory, 18, 21, 50, 182, 183, 186, 308, 325, 342  
 Step by step methods, 364, 375  
 Strasbourg, 271, 276  
 Strode, Ralph, 11, 92  
 Sturm, Johann, 265, 269, 272, 296, 344, 346, 351, 356, 361  
 Style, 291  
     figures, 18, 306, 325, 326, 339, 362  
     linguistic texture, 191-92, 202, 236, 242, 253  
     Melanchthon, 333  
 Subject, 166, 245, 300, 349, 353  
 Substance, 43-44, 45-47, 62, 64, 98, 100, 245  
 Supposition theory, 12, 56, 74, 93, 357  
 Syllogism, 33, 80, 83, 85-86, 88, 171, 200, 252, 255, 326, 331, 332, 338, 352, 355, 356  
 Sylvius, J, 232  
*Syncategoremata*, 12  
 Tacitus, 7, 119, 221  
 Talon, Omer, 334-57, 361  
 Terence, 104, 105, 160, 196, 220, 241  
 Theban talents, 188, 238-40, 308  
 Themistius, 135  
 Thucydides, 24, 186  
 Titelmans, François, 301, 358  
 Tobia del Borgo, 20  
 Toletus, Franciscus, 357  
 Topical description, 131  
 Topical maxim, 135, 138, 142, 155, 353, 285, 330  
 Topics, 22, 110, 124, 130-68, 245, 250, 255, 284, 288, 290, 299, 306, 338, 364, 375

Agricola, 130-68, 311-12  
 and mind, 139, 318, 348, 351  
 Aristotle, 132, 284  
 Boethius, 134-35, 137, 144, 150, 154, 157, 159, 161, 296  
 Cicero, 133, 136, 143, 153, 156, 159, 162, 165, 296, 311  
 Diagram of Agricola's topics, 146  
 Erasmus, 311-12  
 Lists of, 143-50  
*locus*, the word, 136  
 Melanchthon, 326, 328-32  
 Peter of Spain, 155, 159  
 Quintilian, 84, 134, 154, 156, 159, 162  
 Ramus, 352-54  
 Table of correspondences, 147  
 Use of the topics, 131, 136-42, 233-34  
     318  
 Vives, 317-19  
 Tortelli, Giovanni, 25, 26  
 Toscanella, Orazio, 289-91  
 Transcendentals, 32, 39, 59-60  
 Tree of Porphyry, 49, 64-67  
 Trinity, 72, 101  
*Trivium*, 8-15, 111-15, 251-52, 354-55, 366  
 Tübingen, 270, 293, 297  
  
 Ulpius, 97  
 Use of dialectic, 227-43, 332, 345, 348, 356  
 Use of language, 255, 283, 364  
  
 Valerius, Cornelius, 262, 299, 358  
 Valerius Maximus, 20, 221  
 Valla, Lorenzo, 4, 15, 16, 22-116, 125, 141, 148, 156, 244-51, 255, 291, 317, 324, 339, 356, 365  
 adequacy of language, 51-59  
 as philosophical critic, 67  
 attitude to *Repastinatio*, 26-29  
 categories, 42-51, 246  
*De verbo bono*, 24, 27  
 Definition, 41-42  
*Donation of Constantine*, 23, 26  
*Elegantiae*, 22, 23, 26, 29, 96, 116, 248  
*Encomium S. Thomae*, 25, 73, 93  
 Epitaph, 26  
 Forms of Argumentation, 84-88  
 Influence of *Repastinatio*, 117  
 Life, 22-25  
*New Testament*, 22, 23  
 Outline of *Repastinatio*, 31-33  
 Preface to *Repastinatio*, 110  
 Proof and Argument, 80-84  
*res*, 39-41, 53-56, 59, 61  
 Revisions to *Repastinatio*, 33-37  
 System, 38-39, 49  
 Table of Concordance to *Repastinatio*, 36  
  
 Truth, 52, 82  
 Views on other subjects, 74  
 Venice, 272, 290  
 Victorinus, 156  
 Vidoue, Pierre, 269  
 Vienna, 270, 291, 293, 296  
 Virgil, 17, 21, 105, 163, 186, 191-95, 200, 204, 210, 216, 220, 241, 243, 254, 284, 307, 367  
 Visorius, Jean, 265, 268, 289-91, 299, 351  
 Vives, Juan Luis, 115, 261, 314-19, 339, 351  
 Vollandius, Caspar, 259  
 Vries, Hendrik, 117  
 Welsdalius, Herman, 299  
 Willichius, Jodocus, 270, 300 323, 358  
 Wilson, Thomas, 299, 358  
 Wittenberg, 320  
 Wittgenstein, Ludwig, 57-58  
  
 Zeno the Stoic, 7  
 Zwinger, Theodore, 345

## INDEX TO PASSAGES FROM *REPASTINATIO*

<i>Rep.</i>	<i>Ren. Arg.</i>	<i>Rep.</i>	<i>Ren. Arg.</i>
1-8	108-10	239-44	80-83
10-15	59, 102-03	260-61	88
19	51-52, 82	277-78	112-13
30-36	102	289-91	85-86
36-46	100-01	300-28	86
46-49	45, 64-66, 96	308-12	98-100
66-71	72	314-16	91-92
73-98	72-73	328-29	91
110-22	46-47, 62	334-35	87
122-24	40, 52-57	345-48	87
125-26	88-89	352-55	87
127-33	47-48	359-63	108-110
133-34	48	363-65	42-44, 51, 60, 97
142-47	51, 66	366-81	39, 40, 59
156-61	63-64	373-74	60
161-63	41, 89, 104-05	378	51-52
168	41	381-82	61
169-71	88	383-86	63-64
175-77	110-12	389-91	64-66, 96
179-81	74	392	40-41
185-88	74-75	400	41
190-215	75-76	424-36	42-43
217	94-95	428-30	66
219-222	89, 103	536-44	85-86
224-35	77-80, 95	565-65	105-108
235-36	89	575-76	90
237-38	90		

## INDEX TO PASSAGES FROM *DE INVENTIONE DIALECTICA*

<i>DID: chs</i>	<i>DID, pp.</i>	<i>Renaissance Argument</i>
I, 1	1-3	124-25, 138-39, 170, 178, 190
I, 2	6-9	139-41, 170
I, 3	14-18	136
I, 4	22-24	165
I, 5	26-29	150-53, 155-56
I, 11	62-65	165
I, 13	75-76	165-66
I, 14	78-81	157
I, 15	83-85	157-58
I, 16	87-89	158
I, 19	102-04	165
I, 21	110-13	165, 172
I, 22	117-19	159-61
I, 24	132-35	162-63
I, 25	142-46	163-64
I, 28	170-172	148
I, 29	175-76	142
II, 1	178-82	142
II, 2	190-93	168-70, 180, 253
II, 3	195-97	173-74
II, 4	197-201	203-06
II, 5	205-05	212-13
II, 6	206-08	171, 175-76, 179
II, 7	209-213	172, 176-77
II, 8	221-24	181-83
II, 9	226-30	182-83, 185
II, 10	231-35	183-85
II, 11	237-38	184
II, 12	240-42	186
II, 13	244-46	186-87, 254
II, 14	247-52	188, 238-39
II, 15	254-56	251

<i>DID: chs</i>	<i>DID, pp.</i>	<i>Renaissance Argument</i>
II, 16	258-60	191-92, 199
II, 17	261-64	192-95, 199
II, 18	265-68	200
II, 19	279-82	200
II, 20,	283-87	200
II, 21	290-93	200-01
II, 22	296-99	195-96
II, 23	302-06	196-98
II, 26	353-56	227, 233, 239-40
II, 27	358-62	228-29
II, 28	362-66	233
II, 29	367-72	130-31, 233-34
II, 30	375-77	235-37
III, 1	378-80	207-08
III, 2	382-84	209-11
III, 3	386-91	211-12
III, 4	394-97	214-16
III, 5	400-03	216-17
III, 6	405-07	217
III, 7	408-11	217
III, 8	412-15	218-19
III, 9	416-20	220
III, 10	422-25	220-21
III, 11	426-27	221
III, 12	428-33	221-22
III, 13	435-39	222, 254
III, 14	440-43	222-23
III, 15	446-50	224-25
III, 16	451-55	240
Commentary on <i>Pro Lege</i>		
<i>Manilia</i>	461-71	229-32